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**Islamic symbolism: The ideology of the Islamic Revolution in
Iran as reflected in Friday communal sermons, 1979–1989**

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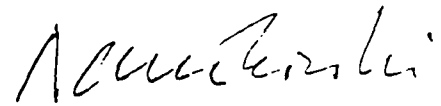
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**ISLAMIC SYMBOLISM:
THE IDEOLOGY OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN
AS REFLECTED IN FRIDAY COMMUNAL SERMONS,
1979-1989**

by

CHAGAY RAM

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures
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Approved

TO LITTLE YONATAN:
may you believe in myths;
may your informed mind never allow you to
be manipulated by myths.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Note on Transliteration.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I. The Political Significance of the <u>Khutbah</u> in Islam and in Revolutionary Iran.....	25
A. Introduction.....	25
B. The <u>Khutbah</u> in Islamic History.....	28
C. The <u>Khutbah</u> in Modern Iran.....	35
D. The <u>Khutbah</u> in Islamic Iran.....	41
Notes.....	62
Chapter II. Symbolism as Interpreted in this Study.	67
Notes.....	96
Chapter III. Activism and Revolutionary Zeal: A New Conception of a Mythical Past.....	101
A. Introduction.....	101
B. "Islam is a Revolutionary Creed"....	108
C. A Battle Against All Odds: The Mythological Heroes of Shi'i Islam Reinterpreted.....	119
Notes.....	145
Chapter IV. Martyrdom and Revolutionary Zeal: The Karbala Paradigm Reactivated.....	154
A. Introduction.....	154
B. The Karbala Paradigm in a Historical Context.....	157
C. The Karbala Paradigm in the Revolution.....	175
Notes.....	222

Chapter V.	The "Government Myth" of Early Islam: The Legitimization of the Islamic Regime Campaign.....	230
	A. Introduction.....	230
	B. Islam as a Political Regime: From a Constitutional Monarchy to an Islamic Republic.....	237
	C. The Divinely Ordained Government: Toward the Realization of the Prophetic Mission.....	257
	Notes.....	291
Chapter VI.	Challenge and Response: The "Divine Politics" of the Islamic Government....	300
	A. Introduction.....	300
	B. Governing in the Mold of 'Ali and Muhammad.....	302
	Notes.....	366
Chapter VII.	The Islamic Revolution as a "Sacred Event".....	375
	A. Introduction.....	375
	B. The Notion of <u>Intizar</u> : From a Passive to a Dynamic Expectation of the Hidden Imam.....	380
	C. Toward the Reenactment of the Contemporary "Myth".....	394
	D. The Propagation of the Contemporary "Myth" on Foreign Soil.....	420
	Notes.....	443
Chapter VIII.	Nationalism and Islamic World Order in the Revolution and the Iran- Iraq War.....	455
	A. Introduction.....	455
	B. From Nationalism to the Islamic <u>Ummah</u> ?.....	458
	C. A War of Islam and Disbelief: The Armies of the Prophet and Abu- Jahl of Iraq.....	482
	Notes.....	514
	Summary and Conclusions.....	521
	Bibliography.....	552

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Transliteration of Persian and Arabic script into English in the present study follows in general the method of the Library of Congress as outlined in the Cataloging Service, Bulletin 119 (Fall 1976), except for the omission of diacritical long marks and dots. Transliteration of Persian proper names and titles follows their Persian pronunciation. Hence, for example, I have used Khomeini and Mosaddeq, rather than Khumayni and Musaddiq, and Ayatollah and Hujjat al-Islam, rather than Ayatullah and Hujjat al-Islam. For geographical locations, I have followed Webster's New Geographical Dictionary (Springfield, Mass: Merriam Co., Publishers, 1980).

INTRODUCTION

A. Description of Subject

This study is a primary research of the Friday congregational sermon (khutbah) in post-Pahlavi Iran. It seeks to unveil the powerful role of the sermon in the Iranian revolutionary process; its instrumental value as a medium of political education, indoctrination, and as a means of influencing public opinion. More precisely, this research examines how the Islamic regime in Iran has resorted in sermons to the most evocative symbols of Shi'i Islam for its own political ends of mass mobilization and regime support; for keeping the revolutionary zeal of the masses at high pitch, and, alternately, for sanctifying the regime's ideology and policy-decisions during the first decade of the Islamic Revolution.

A cursory inquiry into the history of the Islamic lands reveals the dominant role of the khutbah in the development and propagation of socio-political issues and ideas. Aside from the fact that the khutbah has been a recognized expression of independence and political sovereignty, or, on the contrary, of opposition to the

existing political order, it was considered by successive Islamic states a platform from which important decisions and announcements were proclaimed. Thus, throughout the history of Islam, from the age of the Prophet Muhammad to the present, the khutbah has been used "for defending certain policies, for stirring public emotions, and/or disseminating sheer propaganda."¹ This is to say, the khutbah's substantive value of religious guidance aside, it has always served as

a political institution which in normal practice contained explicit references to the government, and was perhaps a means whereby political messages could be conveyed to the people and political influence brought to bear.²

The political nature of the khutbah will be discussed in more detail in chapter one. Nonetheless, the discussion thus far should already make clear why, following the demise of the monarchical regime, the Iranian khutbah emerged as a powerful device for consolidating and sanctifying the Islamic regime. Indeed, soon after Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini (d. 1989) called for the regular reinstitution of the khutbah in July 1979, it has become the most important element in the mass media, designed to expound and legitimize the policies of the Islamic government. As Kazemi explains:

Led by the important personages of Friday prayer leaders (Imam-Jum'ahs), these gatherings are significant indoctrination sessions in addition to having purely religious value of group prayer and affirmation of faith. These are occasion for informing and explaining government directions and decisions to the masses, for rationalizing and justifying them...or for denouncing foreign governments and world-wide imperialism....The Friday prayer sessions and the use of the pulpit are among the most effective means for raising the political consciousness of the masses in support of regime policies. The clerics are most cognizant of the immense value of the pulpit for purposes of both indoctrination and mobilization.³

Hence the significance of the post-Pahlavi sermon for the student of modern Iranian history and society becomes manifest: it is an invaluable and, indeed, one of the best primary sources for the study of Iran's official ideology since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Further, and more important, because the Iranian sermon opens a window to the process of opinion molding and indoctrination in contemporary Iran, it also mirrors the changing perceptions, values, and premises of the Islamic regime, the guardians of Shi'i Islam and the revolution.

The contribution of the research to scholarship stems, in part, from this latter observation. First, given the importance of the khutbah as a channel for evolving socio-political ideas, a study of the Iranian sermon increases

our understanding of the prevailing, changing Weltanschauung of contemporary Iranian society. As Antoun contends, "the sermon, with all its symbolic richness... cannot be considered apart from its social structural context and the vital changes stimulating or besetting the community."⁴ Second, inasmuch as the main political themes in the Iranian khutbah are clothed by religious themes, drawn from the Islamic heritage of Shi'i Iran, this research also sheds light on how religion is used for political ends, especially in a traditional society that is undergoing revolutionary change such as Iran.

This and more, given the pervasive political nature of the khutbah, it appears that no study on Iran's political culture and society can be complete without an inquiry into and a treatment of the Friday sermon as a legitimate research source. Indeed, various studies have been undertaken on the subject of the Friday worship and the Friday sermon. For example, Goitein⁵ established the origin of the Friday communal prayer in Islam, and pointed, among other things, to the inherent socio-political character of the gathering. Likewise, Calder⁶ examined the views of three eleventh-century Sunni scholars on the practice as an expression of political unity and political sovereignty within the (local) Islamic

community. Moreover, Fathi⁷ has focused upon the role of the khutbah during the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, and examined the Islamic pulpit as a medium of political communication in some historical periods. Finally, Antoun⁸ and Borthwick⁹ examined the system of Friday sermons in a comparative perspective. Antoun took the Friday sermon of a Jordanian village as a case study, and Borthwick examined the khutbahs delivered in the urban mosques of Damascus, Amman, and Cairo. Nevertheless, despite the evident instrumental value of the Iranian khutbah, virtually no comprehensive study on the Islamic Revolution, which draws heavily upon this source, has been undertaken. Or, to use Ramazani's words, "Given the importance of the sermon in the Shi'ah cultural tradition in general and its powerful role in the Iranian revolutionary process in particular, it has not received the attention it deserves."¹⁰

Within this context, a study on the system of the Iranian Friday sermon is also likely to shed a new, albeit indirect, light on the overall phenomenon of "Islamic resurgence," which owes a great deal to the Iranian Revolution for its scope, orientation, purport, and durability. Here too, the sermon has received little, if any, academic attention, in spite of its importance for

understanding this process. As Antoun writes,

Over the last fifteen years discussion of 'Islamic revival,' 'Islamic resurgence,' and 'Islamic fundamentalism' has preoccupied scholars and diplomats, businessmen and journalists, military strategists and ordinary citizens. Unfortunately, the entire discussion within and outside academia has taken place, for the most part, in the absence of most of the vital evidence: the message of Islam as it is rendered every Friday in mosques throughout the Muslim world.¹¹

Two final notes are in place. First, this research is concerned with the system of Iranian sermons as a mode of political education and indoctrination, intended, largely, but not exclusively, for internal consumption. Ramazani has branded the post-Pahlavi khutbah as "the most powerful instrument for promoting the Islamic Revolution at home and abroad."¹² This is true, in the sense that the leaders of the Friday prayers often take care to deliver parts of their sermons in the Arabic language, and these, in turn, are broadcast, particularly for the Gulf Arabs.¹³ Yet, sermons in revolutionary Iran are, on the whole, delivered in the Persian language, and their themes are of particular Shi'i and Iranian traits, of no significance to the largely Muslim, yet predominantly Sunni populations outside Iran. In short, given the distinct Shi'i and Iranian themes propagated in the post-Pahlavi sermon, it is safe to conclude that it is

consciously designed to influence public opinion within the confines of the Iranian state.

Second, this research focuses entirely on sermons delivered in the Friday congregational prayers of Tehran, to the exclusion of their counterparts in the various districts and smaller cities of Iran. As will be seen below (see chapter one), the Tehran sermon, in comparison to other sites, is regarded by the Islamic regime as the main channel for political education in the country. In this respect, it was largely from the Tehran pulpit where many of the far-reaching policy statements of the Iranian regime have been made throughout the time span of this study.

B. Approach and Methodology

The main purpose of this study is the examination of an ideology as diffused in the system of Friday sermons. More precisely, this study isolates and discusses certain critical themes in the ideology of the Islamic Revolution, with the aim of examining how the Iranian regime has resorted, in each case, to the most evocative symbols of Shi'i Islam to make their ideology more susceptible and to enhance support for the regime. Hence, this study is

divided into thematic chapters, not along chronological lines, since it is analytical in nature, and is primarily concerned with the content of themes as conveyed by symbols.

Nevertheless, this research is a historical study. This is to say, it examines, within the framework of each chapter, themes and their constituent symbols in a historical context, or, if you will, the chronological order of their development. In other words, I have chosen to use "narrative history" as the basis of each and every chapter, insofar as "Narrative is taken to mean the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with sub-plots."¹⁴ Thus, although the overall arrangement of the material is analytical, it is nonetheless descriptive when the separate chapters are concerned.

A brief discussion on ideology and, particularly, on the interaction between ideology and symbols is in place, as it will clarify why I consider narrative history to be methodologically beneficial for a study of this kind. As a starting point, I will go along with Thompson to observe that "the concept of ideology can be used to refer to the

ways in which meaning serves, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical -- what I call 'relations of domination'. Ideology, broadly speaking, is meaning in the service of power."¹⁵ And, the very same "meaning" is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds, by "a logically coherent system of symbols which...links the cognitive and evaluative perception of one's social condition...to a program of collective action for the maintenance, alteration or transformation of society."¹⁶

Yet, although in the service of power, ideology is not necessarily misleading, illusory, one-sided or false. Indeed, ideology might be as such, but its efficacy -- its ability to "establish and sustain relations of domination" -- is first and foremost contingent on the particular social-historical circumstances in which it exists.¹⁷ That is, ideology -- its employment, circulation, and understanding by individuals -- is always embedded in socially structured contexts and processes. A corollary of this, is that there always exists an interconnection between ideas and the socio-political historical reality. As this reality changes, ideas change along with it. Thus, the ideologue formulates his

ideological approach in reaction to the historical context. He is rooted in society and his platform is an endless response to the changing reality; a continuing effort to reshape reality and to bestow upon it a new meaning and significance.¹⁸

This is also relevant to symbolic forms -- the meaning of ideology and the means with which ideology is propagated -- and, specifically, to the symbols examined in the different chapters of this research. A discussion of how symbols are defined in the study and what sorts of symbols are traced in the khutbahs is offered in chapter two. In the meantime, it suffices to note that this research views symbols as plastic, rather than rigidly fixed, and variable, rather than stable. That is, symbols, along with the ideas they are designed to convey, tend to transform and to be reinterpreted in reaction to changes in the historical circumstances.

Hence the usefulness of narrative history in a study such as this. Since narrative history, to use Stone's cited above words, "is taken to mean the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story," it enables a systematic examination of ideological themes and

their constituent symbols in a historical context. In other words, narrative history is most useful in the endeavor to unfold the intellectual and emotional layers they have accumulated or lost, as a result of changes in the historical reality, throughout the history of Islam and Shi'ism. In short, narrative history provides a useful method for tracing the origin, development and transformation of ideas and symbols throughout the years. It will also make it possible to illustrate how symbols have been recast during various phases of the revolution, to conform with the changing strategies of the Islamic regime and with the changing historical situations.

It is important to emphasize that interspersed throughout this research, although not explicitly reiterated, is the argument that the Islamic regime, fully aware of the people's total attachment to Islam and the 'ulama', has utilized this situation for its own political ends. Hence, the Islamic regime's utilitarian use of basic Islamic symbols. As Menashri observes,

In contrast to most revolutions, the leaders of Islamic Iran did not have to labor to legitimize their ideology, which was widely accepted anyway, nor did they have to seek popular support, which they enjoyed long before coming to power. What they needed was to keep up mass support and to prevent religious-revolutionary zeal from flagging. In order to do this, the 'ulama' made sophisticated and

efficient use...of people's religious sentiment
None knew better than they that the bulk of
 the Iranian people was made up of people for
 whom no ideology other than Islam carried
 conviction. The people's identification with
 their religion and with the clerics was well-
 nigh total.¹⁹

As noted, the different chapters of the study conform to the different themes of the ideology of the Islamic Revolution. That is, they examine isolated ideological themes and, specifically, how these themes were presented by means the distinctive cultural symbols of Shi'i Iran. The themes are: (1) martyrdom (shahadat) and revolutionary zeal; (2) Islamic government; (3) millenarianism and the related theme of exporting the Islamic Revolution; and (4) Islamic unity or the universal vision of Islam.

The above themes were not chosen in random. They are the principal constituents of a systematic structure, the ideology of the Islamic Revolution or the official policy of the clerical regime. In this respect, there is consistency between the separated themes, for they are interrelated, bearing no logic or meaning independently. It is therefore necessary to discuss now the four themes and to assess the inner connection between them. It should be stated from the outset that the four themes will be dealt with in detail, and provided with supporting

references, throughout the different chapters of the study. What follows, then, is a brief overview of the separate parts of what I call the ideological unit of analysis.

To begin with the first theme (martyrdom and revolutionary zeal), it has already been established how Shi'ism can read by its adherents to accord legitimacy both to passivity and quietism and to activism and revolutionary action. However, since the beginning of the 1960's and, to a greater extent, during and after the 1978-79 revolution, activism has, once again, reemerged as a central tenet in Shi'i theory and practice. The regime's efforts since 1979 to preserve the revolutionary fervor of the masses notwithstanding, this activism was first and foremost designed to sanctify the 'ulama's involvement in revolutionary action to topple the monarchical regime.

This brings us to the second theme, Islamic government. According to Khomeini and his disciples, activism is sanctioned in Shi'i Islam, insofar as it is designed to overthrow "tyranny" and "oppression" (of which manifestation was the Shah's regime), and to establish, instead, an Islamic government headed by the 'ulama'. This form of government takes its inspiration from the Qur'an

and from the people and acts for the sake of both. A corollary of this, is that an Islamic government will, of necessity, provide for social justice and equality, and it will also guarantee the sovereignty and independence of Iran in the face of imperialist encroachment upon and exploitation of the country.

The third theme of exporting the Islamic Revolution is closely related to the first two themes. It is linked to the theme of revolutionary fervor, in the sense that it accords legitimacy to activism and struggle, not only against internal tyranny and oppression, but also against external ones, existing in other lands, most notably those inhabited by Muslims and other "oppressed" (mustaz'afin) peoples. In other words, the theme of exporting the revolution calls for revolutionary struggle against oppressive regimes abroad; for the reenactment of Iran's struggle against the Shah by other Muslim and oppressed peoples. In short, the Islamic Revolution is a model for all Muslim and oppressed nations, a springboard from which all Islamic revolutions should emanate throughout the Muslim world.

In a like manner, exporting the revolution is closely associated with the theme of Islamic government, because

it envisages the establishment of analogous governments in those foreign lands where oppression and tyranny have been overthrown. More precisely, exporting the Islamic Revolution not only means the reenactment of Iran's Islamic Revolution on foreign soil, but also, and consequently, the emulation of Iran's exemplary form of government throughout Islam. Finally, revolutionary struggle at home and abroad, as well as the establishment of Iran's brand of government by others, will ultimately pave the way for the return of the Hidden Imam, the Mahdi, from occultation. This is to say, the externalization of the revolutionary struggle and the coming into existence of other Islamic governments, should hasten the Mahdi's eventual creation of just and equitable government throughout Islam and the world at large.

The last theme, Islamic unity, stems directly from all previous themes. That is, through revolutionary action Iran has disposed of internal tyranny and established a just and equitable Islamic government. Consequently, the toppling of oppressive regimes abroad and the creation of Islamic governments throughout Islam should lead to the restoration of the historical Islamic ummah, based on the moral and political unity of all Muslims, Persians or non-Persians, Shi'is or Sunnis. And, since all Muslims should

view Iran's Islamic Revolution and Islamic government as a model, they should also acknowledge Iran's leadership, not only of the world's Shi'ah, but of all Muslims numbering at least 800 million. In other words, Islamic Iran is committed to the universal vision of Islam, which transcends all "artificial" divisions and geographical boundaries among the existing nation-states. Thus, Iran draws its legitimacy, not as a separate territorial entity, but as the kernel of the the Islamic ummah.

A few remarks should also be made about the period of time covered in the study. The year 1979 is, in several regards, a logical and obvious point of departure. It is not only a date marking the ascendancy of the 'ulama' to power, but also the reinstitution of the Friday communal sermon throughout Iran. The year 1989 is the concluding point of the research, inasmuch as it was a turning point in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

In February of that year, Iran celebrated the tenth anniversary of its revolution. On February 14, the Ayatollah Khomeini, precipitating a worldwide furor, called for the execution of Salman Rushdie, author of The Satanic Verses, and subsequently condemned Iranian liberals, pragmatists, and the West. On March 28, Khomeini's hand-picked successor, Ayatollah Husayn 'Ali Montazeri, was removed by Khomeini and the issue of true leadership of the republic dramatically reopened. Scarcely two months later, on June 3, Iran's supreme religio-political leader and guide died....²⁰

Nevertheless, the period examined is, in fact, much more broader and loosely defined. Since the study examines ideas and symbols in a historical context, it traces their origin and development from the early stages of Islamic history. As mentioned, only in this manner can the intellectual and emotional layers they have accumulated throughout the centuries be uncovered.

Finally, it should be noted that throughout the study I have rarely concerned myself with the question of whether the statements made in sermons really express a genuine belief, or are only a facade. Here I went along with Harkabi's observation in Arab Attitudes to Israel, whereby "even an ostensible attitude is not devoid of significance, for it reveals the opinions which the spokesmen wish to be given credit for, or those they desire to impart to their listeners."²¹ However, I have tried to the greatest extent possible to examine these statements in connection with the relevant historical situations.

C. Sources

The primary sources used in the research are 429 weekly sermons delivered in Tehran from the restoration of Friday communal worship in mid-1979 to the end of December 1989. The first 149 Tehran sermons, delivered from July 27, 1979 to May 28, 1982, were found in a four-volume collection entitled, Dar Maktab-i Jum'ah: Majmu'ah-'i Khutbah-'i Namaz-i Jum'ah-'i Tehran, which was published by the Iranian Ministry of Islamic Guidance. The four volumes were published separately, the first two in 1986 (1364), the third in 1987 (1365), and the fourth in 1989 (1367). All subsequent sermons, delivered from June 1982 through December 1989, were found in the Iranian dailies Kayhan and Ittila'at, which published them, more or less verbatim, on a weekly basis.²²

It is noteworthy, that I have not read the entire body of Tehran sermons delivered during the first decade of the revolution. I divided the time span of the research into three distinct periods: (1) 1979-1982; (2) 1983-1987; and (3) 1988-1989. I have read all 190 sermons encompassing the first period. This was essential, inasmuch as the these first years were very crucial, both in terms of the regime's stabilization and of Iran's military position in

the Iran-Iraq War. Indeed, during this first period Khomeini's people have gradually been able to deprive their counterparts in the revolutionary movement from virtually all political power and, after the dismissal of the first president, Abul-Hasan Bani-Sadr, in June 1981, to consolidate their position as the sole rulers of the "new" Iran. Hence, during this period the 'ulama' have succeeded in establishing their institutions (stipulated by the constitution) and install their men in the three branches of government. This period also witnessed how the 'ulama' have skillfully used wartime conditions in order to entrench themselves in power. Toward the end of this period, Iran was also able to take the military advantage in the war, when its armed forces invaded Iraqi territory for the first time (July 1982).

The second period, from January 1983 to December 1987, witnessed the basic trends toward stabilization and continuity that have prevailed since 1982. Hence, I have not found it expedient to go through all the sermons delivered in the period. I chose to read, within a period of each month, only the first and third sermons, and, when five sermons were delivered during a month, the fifth sermon as well, leaving the even-numbered sermons unread. This brought the total of sermons read in the period

covered to 143. Indeed, this was a period when the opposition no longer posed any serious challenge, and, aside from the power struggle among the radical 'ulama', which was seldom publicized anyway, the regime continued to take advantage of its relative stability in order to further perpetuate the 'ulama's rule. During this period the regime had also continued to exploit the exigencies of war in order to gain a firmer hold over the country. In the war front, the opposing parties were, by and large, engaged in a war of attrition, and no significant breakthrough was achieved. Nonetheless, the Islamic regime, ostensibly still unimpressed by the burdens of war, repeatedly reiterated its pre-1983 pledge of "War, war, until final victory!," hence exhibiting a degree of weariness in its wartime rhetoric.

The third period, from January 1988 to December 1989, was perhaps even more crucial than the period of 1979-1982. I therefore read all 96 sermons delivered in Tehran throughout the two years. The turning point came in July 1988, with Iran's acceptance of the United Nations cease-fire Resolution 598, and the consequent period of "Reconstruction." Thereafter, the events have rapidly unfolded: the call for the execution of Salman Rushdie; the removal of Ayatollah Montazeri; the death of Khomeini;

and the appointment of Ayatollah Sayyid 'Ali Khameneh'i as Khomeini's successor. Also, during this period a new constitution was ratified, and Speaker of Parliament, 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, was elected as President of the republic with new, increased constitutional powers.

Notes to Introduction

1. Asghar Fathi, "The Islamic Pulpit as a Medium of Political Communication," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Vol. 2 (1981), p. 164 [hereafter, The Islamic Pulpit].

2. Norman Calder, "Friday Prayer and the Juristic Theory of Government: Sarakhsi, Shirazi, Mawardi," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Vol. 69 (1986), p. 41 [hereafter, Calder].

3. Farhad Kazemi, Politics and Culture in Iran (Ann Arbor: Center for Political Studies Institute, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1988), p. 23 [hereafter, Kazemi]. For a similar observation, see Peter Chelkowski, "Khomeini's Iran as Seen through Bank Notes," in David Menashri (ed.), The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim world (Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: West View Press, 1990), p. 90 [hereafter, Khomeini's Iran].

4. Richard T. Antoun, Muslim Preacher in the Modern World: A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspective (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 10 [hereafter, Antoun].

5. S. D. Goitein, "The Origin and Nature of the Muslim Friday Worship," in S. D. Goitein, Studies in Islamic History and Institutions (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), pp. 111-125 [hereafter, Goitein].

6. Calder, pp. 35-47.

7. See his articles, "The Islamic Pulpit," pp. 163-172; "Communication and Tradition in Revolution: The Role of the Islamic Pulpit," Journal of Communication, Vol. 29 (1979), pp. 102-106; "Preachers as Substitutes for Mass Media: The Case of Iran, 1905-1909," in E. Kedourie and S. Haim (eds.), Towards a Modern Iran (London: Frank Cass, 1980), pp. 169-184 [hereafter, Preachers]; "The Social and Political Functions of the Mosque in the Muslim Community," Islamic Culture (July 1984), pp. 189-199 [hereafter, The Mosque]; and "The Culture and the Social Structure of the Islamic Pulpit as a Medium of Communication in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution," Islamic Culture, Vol. 61 (October 1987), pp. 28-45 [hereafter, The Culture and the Social Structure of the Islamic Pulpit].

8. Antoun.

9. Bruce M. Borthwick, "The Islamic Sermon as a Chnnel of Political Communication in Syria, Jordan and Egypt," Ph.D dissertation, University of Michigan, 1965.

10. R. K. Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 26-27 [hereafter, Revolutionary Iran].

11. Antoun, p. 3.

12. R. K. Ramazani, "Shi'ism in the Persian Gulf," in Juan R. I. cole and Nikkie R. Keddie (eds.), Shi'ism and Social Protest (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 37.

13. Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, pp. 26-27. [Emphasize added.]

14. See, Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History, Past and Present, Vol. 85 (1979), p. 3.

15. John B. Thompson, Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990), p. 7 [hereafter, Thompson].

16. Willard A. Mullins, "On the Concept of Ideology in Political Science," The American Political Science Review, Vol. 66 (1972), p. 510. By "a logically coherent system of symbols," Mullins means that ideologies exhibit "constraint," that is, they differ from "any random or inchoate ideas, attitudes, or feelings about politics." Ideology, Mullins argues, must "'make sense' and not result in logical absurdities." In other words, ideology should provide a "relatively structured and consistent conception of the causal forces working in the social world." This is, in short, what Mullins calls the "cognitive power" of ideology.

17. Thompson, p. 56 [emphasis in original].

18. On this approach to ideas and ideology, see Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in D. E. Apter (ed.), Ideology and Discontent (London and New York: The

Free Press, 1964), pp. 47-76; J. Higham, "American Intellectual History: A Critical Appraisal," in R. Merideth (ed.), American Studies (Ohio, 1968), pp. 218-235; and Q. Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," History and Theory, Vol. 8 (1969), pp. 3-53.

19. David Menashri, Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1990), p. 4 [hereafter, Iran].

20. John L. Esposito, James P. Piscatory and Christopher Van Hollen, "Preface," in John L. Esposito (ed.), The Iranian revolution: Its Global Impact (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990), p. vii.

21. Harkabi, Arab Attitudes to Israel (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. xviii.

22. The Iranian daily Ittila'at should not be mistaken with the London-based Ittila'at, published by the Iranian opposition.

Chapter I:
THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE KHUTBAH
IN ISLAM AND IN REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

A. Introduction

The Friday prayer is the tier (saff) of faith and of overflowing generosity; the theater stage of the able army of monotheism (tawhid) and a vexing thorn in the eyes of the hypocrites (munafiqan) and the atheists. Friday prayer is hope-giving, the hope of conquest and victory. The Friday prayer is the legacy of the rose-colored shrouded martyrs (shahidan), a renewal of the promise [given] to the brave man in the battlefield against oppression, and a pledge of allegiance to the Husayn of the time, the idol-smashing Imam, the mighty Khomeini. The Friday prayer [is] hope in the hearts of friends and companions...and death and frustration in the ranks of...enemies....The Friday prayer is a manifestation of the social and political power of Islam. The Friday prayer is a buttress of the revolution and the powerful fortress of Islam.¹

These words, written on the occasion marking the ninth anniversary of the reinstitution of Friday communal prayers in Islamic Iran, illustrate in a remarkable manner the instrumental, political role assigned to this institution by the Islamic regime. It is more than

implicit in the cited passage that the assembly serves a purpose wider than mere devotion. Indeed, it is considered a "tier of faith." Yet, it is primarily "a manifestation of the social and political power of Islam" on two levels: first, it is a weapon, "a vexing thorn," with which "the able army of tawhid," i.e., the Iranian nation, embarks upon its campaign of "conquest" and "victory" against "oppression" and against other enemies; and, second, but not less important, it is an expression of fidelity and allegiance, not to faith only, but to the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini. Consequently, it is a "buttress of the revolution." In other words, the Iranian Friday congregational prayer, along with its constituent two-part khutbah, serves to advance two major interrelated ends of political education: it injects revolutionary fervor in the people, inciting them to action; and it stimulates mass support for the regime, as a precondition for safeguarding the achievements of the revolution.

Islamic revolutionary indoctrination has always been a crucial device for the solidification of the Islamic regime; a means of fostering popular support on the one hand, and of igniting the public to join in battle against internal opposition and external foes on the other. "Intense domestic propaganda campaigns were held to

impress upon the people that the government was conscious of the people's needs and to keep revolutionary ardor at high pitch."² The increasing alienation and resentment of many Iranians owing to the regime's failure to resolve the mounting social and economic problems and, until 1988, the lack of a significant breakthrough in the war against Iraq, have only intensified domestic indoctrination. In this respect, since early 1979 the Iranian regime has ardently strove to cultivate many diversified channels with the aim of achieving direct access to the public for political instruction purposes. Among these, the media (particularly television, which thus became known as mullavision),³ the educational institutions, and even the military establishment -- the Revolutionary Guards, the Basij (Mobilization) units, and the Army -- are noteworthy. To these are added "Spectacular ceremonies intended to display the achievements of the revolution and to reinforce loyalty to it...held on important dates in the revolutionary calendar."⁴ However, come what may, one fact remains: following the downfall of the monarchy, the khutbah of the Friday congregational prayer in Iran emerged as the main channel for domestic indoctrination. As Chelkowski observes,

though radio, television, and the newspapers are the mouthpieces of the Islamic government, major political pronouncements and

condemnations are made at Friday communal prayers throughout the country....⁵

This chapter examines the Friday khutbah in a historical context, focusing upon its political character and significance. Section B views the political role of the khutbah in Islamic history. Section C will then examine the role of the khutbah in modern Iranian history, from the Safavid period to the demise of the monarchical regime. Finally, section D discusses the khutbah in the service of the Islamic regime in Iran, as a medium of political education aiming at mass mobilization and regime support.

B. The Khutbah in Islamic History

A cursory inquiry into the Islamic lands reveals that the Friday congregational worship has always fulfilled an important political function. This has been true with regards to the advent of Islam in seventh century Arabia, just as it is true today in the contemporary Islamic nation-state. Thus, the first historically known sermons in Islamic times, introduced in Medina by the Prophet's new adherents, the 'Ansar, following the First Pledge of

al-'Aqabah (620), were not merely devotional in their character. "They were rallies which manifested who adhered to the new religion and who failed to do so. They had, from the outset, the character of a socio-political gathering."⁶

Following his emigration, the Prophet, who, as the leader of the community assumed the role of the preacher (khatib), deemed it necessary to designate a time when all members could congregate. His intention was to "meet with them [regularly] in order to guide them and discuss events which effected them."⁷ He, therefore, built the first Mosque next to his house, and made it a place where he addressed his followers and discussed issues and problems with them every Friday at noon. "From there he controlled the political and religious community of Islam."⁸ In short, Muhammad, both as a Prophet and a statesman, elaborated on public policy as well as on the call for salvation in the Friday congregational sermon delivered in the mosque. Within this context,

attendance at the Friday sermon was a political as well as a religious act since it marked adherence to the newly formed ummah....Evidence for this interpretation is the fact that attendance in one place, one particular mosque, was regarded as obligatory for all free adult believing men (but not women or children), that is, for all free men bearing arms, the protectors of the community par excellence.⁹

During the period of the first four "rightful" caliphs and the Umayyads, the Friday congregational worship retained its nearly exclusive socio-political character. First, the caliph, both as a religious and a temporal leader, assumed the Prophet's role as the spokesman, the preacher of the community. And, it was by and large from the pulpit (minbar) of the Friday sermon, where he, or his governors and generals, "issued orders, made decisions and pronounced his views on political questions and particularly questions of general interest."¹⁰ Moreover, the caliph used to sit on the minbar during his inauguration ceremony, taking his oath of office from there.¹¹ In other words, aside from the socio-political subject-matter of the sermon, the occasion was used for asserting the political sovereignty and the legitimacy of the existing political order. In addition, quite in keeping with the nature of the Arab khatib in pre-Islamic times, the caliph or his representative used to lean on a weapon -- a lance, a staff, or a bow -- while delivering the khutbah. This is to say, the weapon, as exhibited in the pulpit, became a token of the caliph's political authority. As Lewis writes, discussing the "metaphors of power" in Islam:

In the Islamic lands...the commonest and most widely used of these were weapons....The caliph 'Umar is said to have carried a riding switch, and most of the early caliphs...made it a practice to carry a spear or a staff on ceremonial occasions. It became usual even for the preacher, when ascending the pulpit during the Friday service, to hold or lean on a sword, or a staff, or a bow.¹²

In 'Abbasid times the political character of the khutbah diminished, and it became more of a religious sermon. This was largely due to the expansion of Islam and the appearance of the imperial caliphate, and the development of independent religious authorities. Consequently, the caliph left it to the religious judges to deliver the Friday sermon. Hence,

The khutbah, which in earlier days was pronounced by the sovereign himself or his governors and generals, and dealt with political, military and other state affairs, became less important. It gradually became more of a divine service, or sermon, and the ruler was no longer the khatib.¹³

Even so, the political nature of the sermon, though diminished, never disappeared, for the pulpit of the congregational prayer continued to represent political authority, as well as religious authority. One should bear in mind that there exists no separation of "church" and state in Islam. Muhammad was both prophet and statesman, and for Muslims, the ummah is simultaneously a religious and a political community under the single jurisdiction

headed by Allah. Accordingly, the mosque has always been a "multifunctional institution, [serving as] a place of asylum, a place to discuss important public matters including preparations for collective defense, a school...and a place of worship."¹⁴ Thus, the khatib, despite his greater stress on pietistic performance, continued to voice political themes of public interest.

In addition, the khutbah of the Friday worship was still viewed as a crucial means for reinforcing the legitimacy of the existing political order. Hence, the practice whereby the name of the ruler was mentioned in the Friday sermon during the invocation of the blessing, conferring legitimacy on his reign.¹⁵ As Chelkowski writes,

In the medieval Islamic state, there were two major indicators of the seat of power. A coin was struck in the name of the ruler of all to see. But of greater significance was to have the name of the ruler mentioned in the khutbah during the Friday congregational prayer.¹⁶

It is noteworthy, that the omission of a sovereign's name from the khutbah was also of political significance, for it was a signal of revolt and a way of announcing a bid for power.

The khutbah's instrumental role of reinforcing the

sovereignty of the ruler, was evident in two other ways. First, as mosques began to increase in quantity they became differentiated: "the official mosques in which the Friday congregational prayer was expected to be performed, often called jawami', became separate in political function and significance from the smaller private and popular mosques often called masajid."¹⁷ And, it was held that the jawami' mosques, where the Friday worship is performed, should be directly supervised and financed by the central Muslim authority, and, as the Shafi'i jurist al-Mawardi (d. 1058) put it, that "No-one may be appointed...to the imamate [of such a mosque] except one appointed...and invested...by the sultan."¹⁸ Thus, the jawami', Friday mosques were government property, and the leaders of the Friday service, the appointees of the central government. In short, the performance of Friday prayers required the existence of a legitimate political authority.

Second, some Muslim Jurists stipulated that the Friday service should be held only in provincial capitals where the representative of the government had his seat. To put it differently, the Friday worship was, in many respects, a symbol of a unified political entity. As Calder observes, the Friday khutbah "may have functioned as a

means to symbolize the relationship between the city as a political entity...and the larger political unit to which it belonged."¹⁹

In modern times the political character of the khutbah was even more accentuated, especially when the growing impact of Western powers, ideas and ways of life in the Muslim lands has lead to unrest and to various uprisings. Writing in 1937, Hitti reiterated the point that the mosque always served "as a general assembly hall and as a political and educational forum."²⁰ He then noted, "In recent years the principal outbreaks against European authority in Syria and Egypt have had their inception in the Friday mosque meetings."²¹ In other words, the khutbah has not only been a recognized expression of independence and political authority, but, on the contrary, due to its dominant role in the development of socio-political ideas, it has been involved in many social movements opposing the existing political order.

This brings us back to Iran, particularly to the period of unrest which led to the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911. For it was at this particular junction in modern Iranian history, where the Friday mosque played a significant role in midwifing the anti-

imperialist, anti-Qajar constitutional movement; in disseminating political ideas, informing, and agitating the largely illiterate public against the misgivings of the government. "There is little doubt," Fathi contends, "that the verbal attacks on the despotic court from the pulpit were instrumental in the unfolding of the events which led to the granting of the constitution by Muzaffar al-Din Shah in August 1906."²² However, before discussing the role of the khutbah in the Constitutional Revolution and in other, subsequent critical periods in Iran, culminating in the revolution of 1978-79, it is necessary to touch briefly upon the political significance of the khutbah in the history of twelver Shi'ism and Shi'i Iran.

C. The Khutbah in Modern Iran

We have seen above that the Sunni caliphs took it upon themselves to pronounce the khutbah of the Friday congregational worship and, hence, reinforce their sovereignty. Similarly, as the religio-political leaders of the Shi'ah, the twelve Imams have had the prerogative of presiding over the Friday prayer and of delivering its constituent sermon. Yet, as opposed to the Sunni rulers, who in later years allowed their representatives to

deliver the sermon, the performance of Friday prayers in the Shi'ah was viewed as the exclusive right of the Imams. The occultation of the Twelfth Imam in 874 thus postponed the existence of the congregational prayer until the return of the Imam as the Mahdi in the end of time. This is to say, the performance of Friday prayers required the existence of a legitimate political authority, a condition that, under the circumstances of the occultation, was thought to be impossible to fulfill.

However, hand in hand with the confirmation of the 'ulama' as the legitimate deputies of the hidden Imam, there consolidated, beginning in the fourteenth century, a view that the Shi'i 'ulama' should also conduct the congregational prayer in the Imam's name. This became the dominant view during the Safavid period (1501-1722); the "general vicegerency" (niyabah 'ammah) of the Shi'i jurist on behalf of the Hidden Imam thus ensured his leadership of the institution of the Friday worship.²³ Or as Cole puts it,

Early Shi'i thinkers after the occultation of the Twelfth Imam felt hobbled in many ways. Many argued that in the absence of the infallible Imam, such functions as Friday prayers and the waging of jihad could not be carried out. This view persisted among Imami Shi'is of the Akhbari school in India well into the eighteenth century, and may lie behind the lack of mosques and Friday prayers to this day

among such heterodox Shi'i groups as the 'Alawis in Syria and Turkey. However, in the central Islamic lands most Shi'i 'ulama' gradually took on Friday prayer functions, though not state-related ones like jihad.²⁴

As noted, the khutbah in Islamic history has been a recognized expression of independence and political sovereignty, or, on the contrary, of opposition to the existing political order. During the Safavid period (1501-1722), when the 'ulama' were dependent on the patronage of the court, the khutbah served to legitimize the rule of the monarchs. As Arjomand observes in his discussion on the coronation of Shah Sulayman,

During the coronation in 1667/1077...the Shaykh al-Islam [the dignitary presiding over shar'i courts in each major city] crowned Sulayman and girded him with the sword and dagger. The khutbah...was then delivered by another religious dignitary....In it, the benefaction and prayer of the hierocracy was bestowed upon the king as the shadow of God and 'illustrious Branch of the Imamic Race,' who is 'according to the true Law become the Lieutenant [of the Hidden Imam]'....Finally, the Shaykh al-Islam bowed three times in front of the king and read a prayer (du'a) for the longevity of the king and the prosperity of the subjects.²⁵

However, with the collapse of the Safavids, and, to a greater extent, the ascendancy of the Qajar dynasty to the throne -- a period characterized by the 'ulama's increasing independence from the court -- the khutbah was

gradually transformed into a vehicle of opposition to the regime. It is true, the Qajar monarchs still had control over the appointment of prayer leaders in certain mosques, and "some religious leaders were not averse to accepting gifts and favors from the government in return for supporting its policies."²⁶ This probably accounts for Arjomand's assertion that "Throughout the nineteenth century du'a-gu'i or praying for the preservation of the king...remained the self-defined function of politically active members of the hierocracy...."²⁷ However, it is safe to argue that, on the whole, government control over the pulpit was limited and, at best, indirect. In this regard, as Western economic encroachment upon Iran increased, along with the corresponding "tyranny" of the Qajars, the Friday mosques increasingly became the focal point of the opposition. "[W]ith the increase in the influence of the religious leaders during the Qajar rule," Fathi writes, "the minbar also increasingly became the platform utilized to promote the political interest of the clergy and to criticize the ruler and his representative."²⁸

The first major manifestation in Qajar times of the pulpit's efficient oppositional role came in the tobacco protest of 1891-92. Indeed, soon after the Iranian monarch

Nasr al-Din Shah issued his famous concession, giving to the British complete control over the production and sale of tobacco throughout Iran,

The religious leaders in two big cities and the capital used the minbar effectively for arousing the people against the tobacco concession. Since the Shah persisted, a fatwa was further proclaimed from the minbar banning the use of Tobacco. This ban was unanimously accepted throughout the country, including the household members of the Shah. To prevent an open rebellion the Shah had to cancel the concession in 1891.²⁹

It was, however, during the Constitutional Revolution when the role of the Friday mosque as an instrument of opposition appears to have been very significant. No doubt, the pulpit was used most effectively by the constitutionalists as a means of informing the public about the government's misgivings and about the virtues of constitutionalism.³⁰ And, after the bombardment of the parliament by Muhammad 'Ali Shah (June 1908), the khutbahs in the city mosques of Tehran and Tabriz "played an important role in agitating the masses and encouraging the people to take arms."³¹ It is noteworthy, that the constitutional Movement was well aware of the khutbah's instrumental value of political education, and, hence, it sought to formulate coordinated themes to be discussed by the preachers from the pulpit throughout Iran. As Fathi

reveals,

A new method of control of the pulpit developed during the Constitutional Revolution. Before the bombardment of the parliament...a secret committee composed of two prominent preachers, two newspaper editors and other constitutionalists, met every morning...to discuss current events and monitor the behavior of the anti-constitutionalists in order to develop strategies for dealing with them from the pulpit and by newspaper editorials.³²

The Pahlavi period (1925-1979) saw the decline of the khutbah. It served neither as a legitimator of rulership, nor as a mode of official, court-directed indoctrination. "The Pahlavi monarchs were almost oblivious of this tradition, relying instead on the modern media."³³ It is true, the position of Imam-Jum'ah, the leader of Friday prayers, in big cities remained under the Pahlavis a state appointment. Hence, the court khutbah in Pahlavi Iran was designed to confer legitimacy to rule, insofar as it presupposed the existence of a legitimate political authority. Yet, even this has not helped the regime much to reinforce its authority and legitimacy:

unless the Imam-Jum'ah was a person of unusual integrity, he had little authority among the people. The last Pahlavi-appointed Imam-Jum'ah of Tehran -- Western educated, allegedly (at the beginning of his appointment) totally innocent of Arabic, allegedly addicted to sports cars, wine, and women in Switzerland -- was a standing joke among religious folk.³⁴

The court khutbah in Pahlavi Iran was, therefore, deprived of practically all substantial political significance. This, however, means not that the pulpit ceased to serve as a critical mode of political education and as a platform for the propagation of socio-political ideas. For, if the Pahlavi monarchs chose to ignore this institution altogether, their opponents among the ranks of the 'ulama' skillfully employed the khutbah for their own political ends. Thus, the sermon continued to fulfill an important oppositional function, especially in 1951-53, when opposition forces headed by Muhammad Mosaddeq forced the Shah into temporary exile, and in the early 1960's, when another outburst of opposition was violently crushed by the government while in its initial stages. It is noteworthy, that this latter outburst of opposition was, in many respects, triggered by Khomeini's violent attacks on the Shah from the pulpit in the holy city of Qom.

D. The Khutbah in Islamic Iran

It is a known fact that the principal outbursts of opposition against the Shah during the revolution of 1978-79 had their inception in Friday mosques. Indeed, during the revolution the network of mosques, already in place,

surfaced as the foremost means of agitating the people, and served as the starting point of massive anti-regime demonstrations. In this respect, the khutbah was truly revolutionary in character. As Bakhash observes, distinguishing between the earlier and the final stages of struggle against the monarchical regime,

The earlier protests were led by the intelligentsia and the middle classes, took the form of written declarations and were organized around professional groups and universities. The new protests were led by clerics, were organized around mosques and religious events, and drew for support on the urban masses.... The earlier protests were generally reformist in content, seeking a redress of grievances and the implementation of the [1907] constitution. The mosque led demonstrations were more radical, even revolutionary in intent....³⁵

Also, during the latter phases of the struggle, Khomeini's declarations from his exile in Paris were dialed in via telephone and recorded, and then used as material for the anti-regime khutbahs throughout the country.³⁶

It should be stressed, that the political, oppositional function of the Iranian khutbah in the 1978-79 revolution stemmed directly from Khomeini's ideology, according to which Friday prayers were an important means of fostering dissent and politicizing society. As early as 1971, Khomeini had devised a strategy for disseminating his revolutionary ideology by means of the 'ulama'. In his

programmatic book Vilayat-i Faqih, "The Governance of the Jurist" (or as it is called in its Arabic version, al-Hukumah al-Islamiyah, "Islamic Government"), Khomeini suggested, in the words of Tabari, "that the clergy use traditional Muslim gatherings, like Friday prayers or the annual Hajj, as means of conducting mass political education." In a like manner, he urged his fellow 'ulama' to utilize religious occasions "as political protests through which the masses could be gradually steeled into a fighting force to destroy the regime."³⁷ Khomeini wrote:

Many of the devotional ordinances (al-ahkam al-'ibadiyah) [in Islam] relate to social and political services....For example, the congregational prayer, the gathering of the Hajj, and the Friday prayer, bear, in addition to moral and sentimental ('atifiyah) effects, political influence [as well]....[the 'ulama' must act in such a way, that the Muslims would] go to the war fronts straight from the courts of the mosques...not stricken by any fear of poverty, illness, death or destruction (daya'), for they fear Allah only. And those who do not fear anyone but Him, they have been ordained with a victory, they shall be triumphant! Take a look into the sermons of the Commander of the Faithful ['Ali], then you will realize that they were intended to arouse the Muslims to [go] to the fronts of the Jihad...and to find solutions to the problems of the people in this world.³⁸

The ascendancy of the 'ulama' to power in early 1979, marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Friday congregational prayer and the Friday sermon in

Iran. Indeed, soon after his triumphant return to Iran Khomeini "called for the reinstitution of the khutbah after Friday communal prayers and urged that everyone attend Friday prayers."³⁹ Khomeini, fully appreciating "the importance of the oral message in the Iranian culture,"⁴⁰ and, especially, the khutbah's historical value as a legitimator of rulership and as medium of political education, was, in all probability, determined to make it the principal device for perpetuating the 'ulama's rule in the country.

The importance which the Iranian leadership attaches to the khutbah as a mode of political education, is evident from statements that were issued at the Tehran sermons throughout the time span of this study.⁴¹ For example, in the first sermon delivered in Islamic Iran (July 27, 1979), Ayatollah Sayyid Mahmud Taleqani (d. September 1979) told the congregation that the khutbah is political in its very nature. Even as early as the Prophet's days, Taleqani asserted, it was devoted to politics, and not merely to worship. In this regard, he referred to the Prophet's first Friday khutbah, delivered in the settlement of Quba on the edge of the Medinan oasis. This was, Taleqani asserted, "The first form of the tawhidi tier," as well as of "justice" and "jihad," and

not only of "worship." Likewise, he continued, the Friday prayer in Islamic Iran should be a "manifestation of the perfection of the tawhidi tier," and at the same time, of the tier "of admonition, of exposing the plots of enemies, and of informing the Muslims of their obligations and responsibilities." The Imam-Jum'ah, he said, should be able "to foster awareness," and, moreover, "to inform the Muslims of events [in Islamic countries]...and of unveiled intrigues."⁴² The khutbah, then, should serve a purpose wider than mere devotion. It should be viewed as a golden opportunity to indoctrinate the people, "to foster awareness," to inform the people "of their obligations and responsibilities" -- to provide them with political, regime-directed, education.

Other prayer leaders followed suit. Hence, Hojjat al-Islam Sayyid 'Ali Khameneh'i told his audience (December 1980), that "Every week the Imam-Jum'ah must tell the people whichever he deems it necessary for them to know." He should acquaint them with "the current situation and with the circumstances in the country," and with "the situation and trends in the world." Finally, he is to "incite...and encourage the people...to brotherhood, to unity, to labor; to give the people the knowledge about enemies...."⁴³ Or, as Hojjat al-Islam 'Ali Akbar Hashemi

Rafsanjani put it (September 1984),

the people must learn their obligations in the congregational prayer through a discussion on the current political, social and judicial affairs. This is in effect what lies in the bottom of the congregational prayer...and I [as a prayer leader] have a duty to discuss... sensitive matters.⁴⁴

The importance attached by the regime to the indoctrinary function of the khutbah is apparent in four other distinct ways. First, given the nature of the issues discussed and the desire to drive home warranted messages, prayer leaders repeatedly instructed their audiences to pay close heed to the content of sermons. For instance, in March 1980 Khameneh'i exhorted the congregation saying, "listening to both khutbahs is an obligation (vajib).\" The audience \"should not occupy themselves with other matters; they should not speak, they should not smoke. They [must] listen to the content of the khutbah so that it... would be clear and expounded for all.\"⁴⁵

Second, in consequence of the regime's determination to make the khutbah a primary means of furthering their entrenchment in power, it has sought to establish guidelines for all Friday prayer leaders to elaborate in mosques throughout the country. Hence, the establishment in October 1982 of the Central Council of Imam-Jum'ahs,

which included, among other officials, five leading prayer leaders. It is noteworthy, that Prime Minister Mir-Husayn Musavi nominated a minister to act as coordinator between the cabinet and the council.⁴⁶ "It was a step of major importance, being the first attempt after the establishment of the Islamic regime, to formulate a methodical and coordinated propaganda approach."⁴⁷

Yet, the sermons at hand clearly show that the regime had planned to coordinate and methodize the Khutbahs' subject-matter -- and, hence, make this institution a more efficient instrument of political education -- much earlier than October 1982. Indeed, as early as December 1980, Khameneh'i used the pulpit in order to urge all prayer leaders in the country to respond favorably to Montazeri's call to attend a conference of Imam-Jum'ahs in Qom. Ayatollah Montazeri, he said,

invited prayer leaders to assemble next week in Qom to exchange views with each other with the aim of making a [concerted] effort to promote the contents of the Friday prayer, and to give...more color...to this obligation which is our honor....⁴⁸

Third, given its awareness of the khutbah's indoctrinary potential, it is not surprising that the regime has been very eager to make the message of the

sermon accessible to each and every home in Iran. It therefore chose to broadcast the Friday prayers throughout the country. Consequently, "The Tehran Friday prayers...were nationally broadcast and prayers in the smaller cities were broadcast locally."⁴⁹ The fact that the sermons of Tehran were, and still are, broadcast nationally, attest to the importance of this particular weekly gathering, a point I will discuss in greater length later on.

At any rate, statements made in sermons point to the desired objective of their broadcast. Consider, for instance, the following words of Rafsanjani (April 2, 1982):

[Please] observe that at this hour all over this country, in this country of 40 million, approximately 10 million people are sitting on the ground at the Friday prayers. And those who [remained] at home and are listening to the radio, with their ears tuned to the words of Islam, are also many.⁵⁰

Hence, the broadcast of Friday prayers, whether of Tehran or of other localities, makes them available to a great number of people, who, otherwise, would have no opportunity to listen to "the words of Islam." In other words, the broadcast of khutbahs is intended to expose more people to their messages, and, as a result, to widen the range of those indoctrinated through this medium.

Finally, the Khomeini regime's appreciation of the khutbah's indoctrinary usefulness was also mirrored in its repeated appeals to prayer leaders to serve as an example to the people. For instance, in late 1983 Montazeri urged the preachers, "to maintain a positive image and proper relations among themselves."⁵¹ This is so, he added, because they "must serve as an example and a symbol" to the Iranian public. In addition, in October 1983 Khomeini declared, "The role of the Imam-Jum'ah is to create the ties between the 'ulama [the regime] and the nation."⁵²

The question remains, however, what precisely has the Islamic regime sought to achieve through its utilization of the khutbah as a medium of political education? What sort of awareness and what notions has it attempted to infuse in the minds of the people through the weekly orations from the pulpit? I have indicated above that the regime's intention was twofold: to foster popular support -- and, thus, perpetuate the 'ulama's rule in the country; and, to keep up the revolutionary fervor of the masses at high pitch -- and, thus, circumvent popular discontent from its own shortcomings. The various chapters of this study will show how the Iranian regime has attempted to

achieve this twofold objective by resorting in sermons to the most evocative symbols of Shi'i Islam. Nevertheless, this is the place to examine how prayer leaders themselves have displayed the system of Iranian sermons as a means of furthering support for the regime and as a stimulant for revolutionary action. Let's first examine how the system of Friday khutbahs was thought to be fostering mass support for the regime; to be serving as a legitimator of rulership.

As a starting point, I chose to cite the following words of Ayatollah Muhammad Mahdi Rabbani-Amlashi, directed to the young recruits of "petty-groups," guruhak (a derogatory term used for left-wing opposition organizations), who were apprehended and sentenced by the regime. This is what Rabbani-Amlashi had to say in December 1981:

O petty-groups!....If your conscience, your associates, your organization -- whatever -- would only allow you to turn on the television while the sermons of the Friday prayers are broadcast...perhaps you would be a bit more aware of [your] foolishness (ghaflat).⁵³

In other words, the sermon inevitably leads one to support the Islamic regime, provided, of course, that he would be attentive to the words of the khatib. The only reason there are manifestations of opposition, is that some

circles have chosen, whether willingly or unwillingly, to shut their ears to the words of truth uttered from the pulpit.

Another token of dissent, is the refusal to participate in this support-symbolizing assembly. This is to say, attendance at the Friday khutbah is a token of the people's support for the revolution and the "leader," or for the Islamic community and the Islamic creed. In both cases, attendance demonstrates the people's allegiance to one and the same thing, because the revolution is, by definition, Islamic; it was carried out for the sake of Islam. In the Friday congregational prayer, Montazeri asserted (December 1979), "All are standing, all [shout] one slogan, all...are following the leader, all kneel down, they prostrate." In short, the people attending the congregation are "harmonious with the leader."⁵⁴ Or,

[T]he entire nation is coming to the Friday prayers -- the poor, the rich, the administrator, the merchant, the laborer, the farmer, the weak...women, [and] men. All the classes come and they have one slogan; [and] their slogan is based on the faith in God, in Islam. All are saying 'God is Great,' all are kneeling down for God. They have one slogan: the slogan of Islam, of God and of religion. And, they follow one leader who stands before them. When he kneels down, all kneel down; when he bows, all bow. He obeys, all obey unitedly [and in] harmony.⁵⁵

A corollary of this, is that attendance at the Friday sermon, as was the case in early Islamic history (see above), manifests who adheres to religion and to the Islamic government and who fails to do so. No doubt, it was for this reason that Rafsanjani announced in January 1982, that the khutbah displays the "agreeable forces" (niru'ha-'i muvafiq), and so, according to some traditions, the faithful should not "marry" or "do business" with "those who do not come to the Friday prayer." The latter, Rafsanjani said, "are not Muslims." "Attendance at the Friday prayer," he summed up, is "a token ('alamat) of accepting the existing government, the existing order (nizam), and Islam."⁵⁶

Attendance at the Friday sermon in post-Pahlavi Iran is therefore a religious as well as a political act, since it marks adherence to Islam, and at the same time to the ruler, the guardian of Islam. One major indication to this supposition is the fact that attendance (again, as was the case in early Islam) is regarded as obligatory for all believing men. Hence, it was argued that the Prophet always "condemned" people who rarely participated in the assembly; "The Prophet always laid stress on the continuing participation in Friday prayers."⁵⁷ Likewise, Montazeri stated (January 1980), "you have no right to

abandon [the prayer] for reasons of...the vanities of the world." He then cited a hadith attributed to the Prophet, inna Allah farada 'alykum al-Jum'ah, "God enjoined upon you the Friday prayer"; wa-man tarakaha fi-hayati aw ba'da mawti, "and whoever abstained from it during my lifetime or after my death," istakhifafan bihi aw juhudan laha, is [doomed to] contempt and is repudiated."⁵⁸ And, in order to emphasize the obligatory nature of the Friday prayer, Montazeri cited (September 1979) another hadith, whereby al-salah fi-jama'ah wa-law 'ala ras al-zujj. Or, according to Montazeri's translation, "You must recite the prayer in congregation even at the bayonet point, that is, [when] there is so much pressure not enabling you to assemble."⁵⁹

There are other qualities in the Iranian sermon which serve to enhance the legitimacy of the Islamic regime and, consequently, popular support for it. It may be recalled, that the khatib in the medieval Islamic state was either the ruler himself or an appointee of the ruler. Hence, in both cases the performance of the khutbah, at least in theory, was contingent upon the existence of a legitimate political authority. The khatib in Islamic Iran is no exception. Frequently, he is a member of the governing body, most notably, of the presently dissolved Islamic

Republican Party (IRP), and, in any case, he must be a delegated representative of the "leader," who, until 1989, was Ayatollah Khomeini.

For instance, during the bulk of the 1980's the Tehran sermon was presided over by Khameneh'i, who in his other capacity also served as the president of the republic, second to Khomeini only. As Rafsanjani noted in the first sermon after the election of Khameneh'i to the presidency (October 1981),

...we have had the president of our republic as the Imam-Jum'ah of Tehran...[and] the spirit of Islam is the same. You know that in an Islamic order there was the Prophet who was the Imam-jum'ah, and 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib who was [an] Imam....[You are fortunate that] the second man of your country...[will] stand in this mihrab and guide the people every week [with] his voice and his khutbahs....⁶⁰

We may, therefore, observe, along with Montazeri, who offered his commentary on a hadith attributed to the Eighth Imam, 'Ali al-Riza, that the "ruler must establish the Friday prayer....That man who holds the power...should have the means...to preach to the people." He should be able "to inform the people of the interest of their religion and of the world."⁶¹

As noted, other Iranian jum'ah-Imams had to be the nominated representatives of the "leader." As Rafsanjani

declared (September 1984),

The khatib is first and foremost the person of the Leader (shakhs-i rahbar). This is to say, this post belongs to the leader of society, and it is the leader who appoints the preachers. Prayer leaders are appointed, and they are the direct appointees of the Imam [Khomeini].... [T]his is the basis of their authority....⁶²

It is interesting to note that, as Khomeini's personal representatives, the Juma'h-Imams often overshadowed the authority of the provincial governors, especially in the big cities but also in the smaller towns.

Another distinctive mark in the post-Pahalvi sermon which serves to reinforce the legitimacy of the Islamic regime, also has its roots in the khutbah of early Islamic history. I have indicated above that the caliph or his representative used to deliver the khutbah while leaning on a weapon -- a bow, a staff or a lance. This was regarded as a token of the caliph's political authority. In a like manner, "after the Iranian revolution of 1979 many Iranian mullahs in Tehran were photographed delivering khutbahs holding rifles with the butt resting on the floor in their right hand."⁶³ Indeed, I possess some newspaper photographs taken in the early days of the revolution, which show Montazeri holding a Kalashnikov rifle while delivering his sermon in Tehran. At any rate, it was Khameneh'i who explained in January 1980, that

The Imam-Jum'ah...must lean upon a weapon (silah); he must make his cane a weapon, stand before the people, and [explain to them] in clear and confident words, the most basic, expedient and truthful issues of a great congregation.⁶⁴

The weapon as a token of political authority, is closely related to the question of how the post-Pahlavi khutbah has been thought to be stimulating revolutionary action, which is, as noted, another major indoctrinary objective of the Islamic regime. Let's return to Khamanahi's cited above khutbah in order to make this point clear. In the above excerpt, Khameneh'i spoke of the weapon as the insignia of the khatib. Yet, it is not merely used as an allusion to political authority. It is also used by the khatib to signify the ability of the Friday assembly to arouse the people to confront the "enemies of Islam"; to instill in them revolutionary zeal and to keep it at fever high. Hence, Khameneh'i continued, the khatib

must lean on a weapon, that is, Islamic society...leans on a weapon against the enemies of God; it relies upon its own power, it relies upon a great congregation which is able to neutralize the plots of enemies. Thus, [the Friday assembly] is a prayer and a remembrance of God, and at the same time it is a weapon, it is potency and an expression of power....In other words, a nation struggles equipped with the remembrance of God; equipped with the remembrance of God, it does not crawl to the corner. It stands in the mihrab, that is, the

mahall-i harb [place of war]....⁶⁵

Indeed, the innate ability of the Friday assembly to propel the people to revolutionary action has made it, according to prayer leaders, a weapon by its own merit, the "nightmare" of enemies on the one hand, and the guarantor of the Muslims' victory on the other. This, they claimed, has been proven time and again throughout history, and, most recently, in the Islamic Revolution. Khameneh'i, for instance, stated (July 1980), that "the enemy is afraid of the mosques." This is so, because it has seen in them "the fire of revolution." More precisely, the enemy saw how "you assemble in the mosques...clench your fists...and bring them down upon its [head]." Before the revolution, Khameneh'i said, "the enemy experienced the role of the mosques in Algeria and in many of the countries where Muslims have risen."⁶⁶ No doubt, Khameneh'i asserted on another occasion (May 1980), with its "materialistic tools," the enemy cannot "assess or evaluate the power which is drawn from" the Friday assembly. It does not understand that when a man attends the congregational prayer, "says 'God is great', and [then] sets forth upon a task, he is invincible."⁶⁷

We see, then, that Friday khutbah throughout Islamic

Iran is highly regarded as a medium of political education, and is thought to be a valuable instrument for enhancing regime support and for inciting the masses to revolutionary action. Yet, the Tehran sermon holds a more prominent position than its counterparts in this respect. The importance of the Tehran sermon is evident for a number of reasons. First, as noted, the khutbah from the capital is available to most Iranians, for, in contrast to sermons in other localities, it is broadcast live on national Iranian television and radio.⁶⁸ Likewise, the Tehran khutbah is regularly reproduced in government controlled newspapers and journals.⁶⁹ Moreover, in order to make the Tehran khutbah accessible to a wider range of people, it is performed, not in a mosque, where most sermons are usually delivered, but in a spacious field in the campus of Tehran University. "Every Friday," Chelkowski notes, "free-fare buses bring thousands of people to Tehran University. Here they pray together, listen to keynote speeches, and become mobilized and excited together."⁷⁰

Second, throughout the 1980's many of the most senior heads of the regime have been invited to deliver sermons from the pulpit of Tehran University. For instance, Khomeini's successor (until 1989), Montazeri, President

Khameneh'i, Speaker of Parliament, Rafsanjani, member of the Council of Guardians, Imami-Kashani, Head of the Supreme Court, Ardebili, and many other senior state officials have delivered numerous weekly sermons in the capital. The Tehran pulpit has also served as a platform from which other important state functionaries (such as commanders in the Revolutionary Guards and the Army, cabinet and parliament members) spoke regularly to the congregation before the commencement of the official khutbah.

Finally, it was by and large from the Tehran University pulpit, where many of the most critical policy decisions of the Iranian regime have been proclaimed. Ramazani, for instance, observes that "Speaker Rafsanjani has delivered more far-reaching statements on the Gulf during Friday sermons [in Tehran] than he has in the halls of the Iranian majlis."⁷¹ Khameneh'i himself, in his capacity as prayer leader of Tehran, acknowledged (although indirectly) that the Tehran sermon is the principal forum where major political pronouncements are made. While discussing the regime's policy toward Soviet occupation of Afghanistan he stated (June 1980),

[Some] People...approached me saying, 'For some time now you have not said anything about the issue of Afghanistan in the Friday prayers. Has

there been a change in the policy of the government...toward the issue of Afghanistan?' I say in reply, the policy of the government... is the same Islamic policy [we have always conducted] in relation to the Afghani brothers.⁷²

During 1987-88, continuous Iraqi missile attacks on Iranian cities, the Iraqi use of chemical weapon, and the mounting economic burdens and casualties of war, have all led to an erosion in popular support for the regime and to a potentially dangerous public resentment. During the same period, and not coincidentally, the dailies Kayhan and Ittala'at began to publish photographs of multitudes of people attending the Friday prayers, many of whom were dressed in white shrouds so as to show their readiness to be martyred in battle against the Iraqi enemy. These photographs are of major significance. They provide clear evidence to the surmise that Friday prayers in Iran remained an effective device for mass mobilization, even in times when the regime lacked the mass support it has always sought. Indeed, the fact that dozens of participants in the Friday prayers still demonstrated their enthusiasm to be martyred in a war which most Iranians have grown weary of, attests to the khutbah's everlasting power to maintain support for the regime and to keep the revolutionary fervor of the people alive.

Our discussion in this last section has shown the dual, revolutionary action-inciting and legitimacy-bestowing, political role of the khutbah in post-Pahlavi Iran. Let's turn now to examine what sorts of symbols are dealt with throughout the study, symbols which have consciously been employed in sermons, and whose primary goal too, has been to incite the masses to revolutionary action and to bestow legitimacy upon the Islamic regime.

Notes to Chapter One

1. Ittila'at, July 18, 1987.
2. Menashri, Iran, p. 4.
3. Ibid., p. 6.
4. Ibid., p. 218.
5. Chelkowski, "Khomeini's Iran," p. 90.
6. Goitein, p. 122.
7. Fathi, "The Mosque," p. 190.
8. Ibid., p. 189. Also see, A. J. Wensinck, "Khutba," The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition [hereafter, Wensinck]; and Johs Pedersen, "Khatib," ibid., 2nd edition [hereafter, Pedersen].
9. Antoun, p. 186.
10. Pedersen.
11. Fathi, "Preachers," p. 172.
12. Bernard Lewis, The Political Language of Islam (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 121. Also see, Pedersen; and Wensinck.
13. Fathi, "The Mosque," p. 193.
14. Antoun, p. 68.
15. Wensinck.
16. Chelkowski, "Khomeini's Iran," p. 90.
17. Antoun, p. 186.
18. Cited in Calder, p. 44.
19. Ibid., p. 36.
20. Philip Hitti, History of the Arabs (tenth edition; London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 267.

21. Ibid, p. 267 n3.
22. Fathi, "The Culture and Social Structure of the Islamic Pulpit," p. 32.
23. Said Amir Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the beginning to 1890 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 141-142 [hereafter, The Shadow of God].
24. Juan R. Cole, "Imami Jurisprudence and the Role of the 'ulama: Mortaza Ansari on Emulating the Supreme Exemplar," in Keddie (ed.), Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 37. On the origin and development of the shi'i doctrine of jihad, see chapter eight.
25. Arjomand, The Shadow of God, p. 178.
26. Fathi, "The culture and Social Structure of the Islamic Pulpit," p. 40.
27. Arjomand, The Shadow of God, p. 229.
28. Fathi, "Preachers," P. 173.
29. Fathi, "The Islamic Pulpit," p. 167. On the pulpit as a means of opposition during the tobacco protest, see, Nikkie R. Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-92 (London: Frank Cass, 1966), pp. 65ff [hereafter, The Tobacco Protest].
30. Fathi, "Preachers," pp. 173-174.
31. Fathi, "The Culture and Social Structure of the Islamic Pulpit," p. 44.
32. Ibid., pp. 40-41.
33. Chelkowski, "Khomeini's Iran," p. 90.
34. Michael M. J. Fischer, Iran from Religious Dispute to Revolution (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 138 [hereafter, Iran].
35. Shaul Bakhash, The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p.

15 [hereafter, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs*]. Also see, *idem.*, "Sermons, Revolutionary Pamphleteering and Mobilisation: Iran, 1978," in S. A. Arjomand (ed.), From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 177-195.

36. Chelkowski, "Khomeini's Iran," p. 90.

37. Azar Tabari, "The Role of the Clergy in Modern Iranian Politics," in Nikkie R. Keddie (ed.), Religion and Politics in Iran, p. 71.

38. Ayatullah al-Khumayni, al-Hukumah al-Islamiyah (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'ah, 1979), pp. 124-126.

39. Fischer, Iran, p. 217. Hamid Algar, quoting Ayatollah Husayn 'Ali Montazeri, reveals that the establishment of Friday prayer services in Tehran and most other Iranian cities resulted from an initiative of Ayatollah Taleqani. See, Ayatollah Sayyid Mahmud Taleqani, Society and Economics in Islam, trans. by R. Campbell, with annotations and an introduction by Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1982), p. 20 f12.

40. Chelkowski, "Khomeini's Iran," p. 90.

41. Citations of and references to sermons throughout the study relate only to those delivered in Tehran. Hence, hereafter I will omit the word "Tehran" while discussing them.

42. July 27, 1979, Dar Maktab-i Jum'ah: Majmu'ah-'i Khutbah-'i Namaz-i Jum'ah, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Chapkhanah-'i Vizarat-i Irshad-i Islami, 1364), pp. 1-2 [hereafter, Khutbah, Vol. 1].

43. December 19, 1980, Dar Maktab-i Jum'ah: Majmu'ah-'i Khutbah-'i Namaz-i Jum'ah-'i Tehran, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Chapkhanah-'i Vizarat-i Irshad-i Islami, 1365), pp. 29-32 [hereafter, Khutbah, Vol. 3].

44. Ittila'at, September 29, 1984. For similar expressions, see Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, July 28, 1984.

45. March 28, 1980, Dar Maktab-i Jum'ah: Majmu'ah-'i Khutbah-'i Namaz-i Jum'ah-'i Tehran, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Chapkhanah-'i Vizarat-i Irshad-i Islami, 1364), p. 85 [hereafter, Khutbah, Vol. 2]. For similar expressions, see Montazeri, December 28, 1979, ibid., Vol.

1, pp. 195-196; and Montazeri, January 4, 1980, ibid., p. 199.

46. Menashri, Iran, p. 218.

47. Ibid..

48. December 19, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 31.

49. Menashri, Iran, p. 195.

50. April 2, 1982, Dar Maktab-i Jum'ah: Majmu'ah-'i Khutbah-'i Namaz-i Jum'ah-'i Tehran, Vol. 4 (Tehran: Sazman-i Chap va-Intisharat-i Vizarat-i Farhang-i va-Irshad-i Islami, 1367), p. 340 [hereafter, Khutbah, Vol. 4).

51. Montazeri in a meeting with the Council of Imam-Juma'hs of the districts, Kayhan, October 26, 1983.

52. Khomeini in a speech before the council of Imam-Jum'ahs of the districts, Ittila'at, October 27, 1983. I am indebted to Professor David Menashri for turning my attention to these last two references.

53. December 11, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 138.

54. December 28, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, p. 194.

55. Montazeri, January 4, 1980, ibid., pp. 200-201. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, December 12, 1980, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 23-24; Khameneh'i, December 19, 1980, ibid., pp. 29-31; Khameneh'i, May 22, 1981, ibid., p. 220; and, Hojjat al-Islam Aqa Imami-Kashani, Ittila'at, October 19, 1985.

56. January 8, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 183. Also see Hojjat al-Islam Qara'ati's speech before the sermon, Ittila'at, October 29, 1983. On the speech before the sermon, see below.

57. Jalal al-Din Farsi, before sermon, Ittila'at, January 22, 1984. Also see, Hojjat al-Islam Tavassoli, before sermon, Ittila'at, August 9, 1986.

58. January 4, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 197-200.

59. September 28, 1979, ibid., pp. 74-75. Also see, Montazeri, December 28, 1979, ibid., pp. 194-195.

60. October 16, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 47. For similar expressions, see Rafsanjani, March 26, 1982, ibid., p. 313.
61. September 28, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, p. 77.
62. Ittila'at, September 29, 1984. Also see, Taleqani, July 27, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 1-2.
63. Antoun, p. 69 n10.
64. January 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 2.
65. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
66. July 11, 1980, ibid., p. 218. For similar remarks, see Khameneh'i, May 22, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, 1981.
67. May 22, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 135. Also see, Khameneh'i, December 19, 1980, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 31-32; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, July 28, 1984.
68. Even the religio-politically important sermon of Qom, which was led during the bulk of the 1980's by Khomeini's hand-picked successor, Ayatollah Montazeri, has been left out from national Iranian television.
69. Kazemi, p. 23.
70. Chelkowski, "Khomeini's Iran," p. 90. According to Chelkowski, "The campus of Tehran University is in the shape of an inverted letter U. The buildings of various colleges are situated on the arms of the U. Between the arms there is a huge open space which has been used for various purposes, such as sport events, revolutionary rallies, and lately the Friday prayers." See, ibid., p. 101 n7.
71. Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, p. 27.
72. June 20, 1980, Khutbah, vol. 2, p. 198.

Chapter II:

SYMBOLISM AS INTERPRETED IN THE STUDY

No man can have in his mind a conception of the future, for the future is not yet. But of our conceptions of the past, we make a future.¹

According to many scholars, the essence of symbolism "lies in the recognition of one thing as standing for (representing) another...."² A symbol, they argue, is anything -- a term, a name, or even a picture -- that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning.³ A symbol, in their view, thus implies something unknown, or hidden from us; it is an object that we know, yet it should not be simply taken at face value, for it stands for something else, of greater significance. In an attempt to explain his life-work in psychology to the nontechnical reader, the celebrated Carl Gustav Jung presented the following example of symbol:

Take the case of the Indian who, after a visit to England, told his friends at home that the English worship animals, because he had found eagles, lions, and oxen in old churches. He was not aware...that these animals are symbols of the Evangelists and are derived from the vision of Ezekiel.⁴

The complexity of such fields as "symbolic behavior," "Symbolic interactionism," "structural analysis" of symbols and other related notions notwithstanding, it may be said that the above general interpretations of symbol are indeed prevalent, and, to say the least, legitimate. For the narrow purpose of this research, however, the definition of symbolism offered here, and the sorts of symbols to be traced in the khutbahs, are, in some respects, different.

As a starting point, I will go along with Geertz to define a symbol in its broad sense, as "any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception -- the conception is the symbol's 'meaning'."⁵ In this respect, a symbol may or may not possess two or more references; it may "stand for something else," something that is vague and unknown to us, but it may just as well stand for what it is in actuality -- a "conception" of itself. When a man, to use Geertz's example, needs to build a dam, "he needs also a conception [of it] he can get from some symbolic source -- a blueprint, a textbook, or a string of speech by someone who already knows how dams are built...."⁶ The symbol which serves as a vehicle for the conception of a dam, may therefore be the "blueprint" of the dam itself, no more

and no less.

The function of such symbols is, nonetheless, complex and vital for the existence of any given social group. This is made manifest if we first accept the following argument: "It is the cluster of...symbols, woven into some sort of ordered whole," which makes up the cultural system of society.⁷ If so, culture may be defined as a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms. And the same definition may also be applied to any given religion -- be it Judaism, Christianity or, the religion which concerns us here, Islam -- inasmuch as it constitutes part of society's cultural system, or the whole of that system.⁸

Hence, the social significance of symbols: without them, man would be completely lost. This is to say, without the assistance of the very symbols which constitute one's cultural system, man would be functionally incomplete. Undirected by organized systems of symbols, man's behavior would be virtually ungovernable, "a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his experience virtually shapeless."⁹ Symbols are an essential requirement for survival in this world, because the conceptions they

create help man understand his particular social context, or, in short, his reality. As Firth observes, "Man does not live by symbols alone, but man orders and interprets his reality by his symbols, and even reconstruct it."¹⁰ Or, as Langer puts it,

Because [man's] characteristic function and highest asset is conception, his greatest fright is to meet what he cannot construe -- the 'uncanny,' as it is popularly called.... Under mental stress even perfectly familiar things may become suddenly disorganized, and give us the horrors. Therefore our most important assets are always the symbols of our general orientation in nature, on the earth, in society, and in what we are doing: the symbols of our Weltanschauung and Lebensanschauung.¹¹

Thus, symbols create conceptions by which man can comprehend and endure the inexplicable world which surrounds him. This means not, however, that symbols in themselves solve problems, that they can replace, for instance, injustice with justice, chaos with harmony. Nevertheless, cultural symbols are capable of explaining one's predicament, ambiguities and paradoxes in such a way that it is possible to come to some sort of terms with them. To sum up, symbols, and particularly the conceptions they create, enable man "to make sense out of experience, to give it form and order....[They] provide orientation for an organism which cannot live in a world it is unable to understand."¹²

Another important characteristic of symbols is their dynamics or flexibility. This is only natural because, as shown above, culture is embodied in symbols. Hence, as culture changes, the meanings of symbols -- the conceptions that symbols produce in one's mind -- inevitably change with it. "The expressiveness of symbols can be intensified (or diminished) by circumstances."¹³ More precisely, under conditions of social change, the meanings and interpretations of symbols tend to be modified as each generation reinterprets the past in terms of its own current premises and values.¹⁴

Symbols, as understood in this research, are therefore (1) an integrated part of a particular culture; (2) they form (clear, not vague) conceptions that explain reality and how to cope with it to a certain social group, and; (3) they tend to change whenever a change occurs in the historical context. Yet, these three basic characteristics of symbol still leave the term in question ambiguous and obscure. In other words, they do not explain what exactly are the sorts of symbols that will be traced and examined in the khutbahs at hand. Surely, one might reasonably assume that, since this research deals with a regime's strategies of mass mobilization and regime support, it

should focus on what Mills calls "master symbols."¹⁵ However, this study deals with another type of symbols which, although they are not termed as such, they still conform with the above characteristics of symbol, and, more importantly, provide the Iranian regime with an convenient instrument of mass mobilization.

The specific type of symbols that I will deal with throughout the study are myths. This is to say, I will show how the Islamic government in Iran has resorted in sermons to the most evocative myths of Shi'i Islam to incite the masses to action and to enhance support for the regime. It is therefore necessary to devote the remaining part of this chapter to some reflections on mythology. It should be stressed, that the following discussion is not and, indeed, cannot cover the whole corpus of literature on mythology and the abundant, often conflicting, interpretations of myth. As Patai writes,

For at least twenty-five centuries man has asked the question 'what is myth?' The problem has attracted the attention of people with greatly varying interests, orientations, and preoccupations, so inevitably they adopted widely disparate approaches and came up with widely dissimilar answers. Today, when we know a lot more about myth than was known in any previous age, we are still as far as ever from a generally agreed upon consensus as to the meaning of myth.¹⁶

I will therefore confine my discussion to showing how

myths should be comprehended in this study, and why they can very well be thought of as a symbols. I will also point to the "power" of myth as a valuable instrument for mass mobilization.

The term "myth," or mythos, entered the lexicons of Western societies by way of ancient Greek culture. The original meaning of the word, as used by Homer and other ancient Greek authors, was "word," "matter," "fact," "story," and primarily an "account" of what actually happened in the past.¹⁷ Indeed, a myth is always a story, a narrative of events. It has a protagonist or protagonists, and it has a plot with a beginning, a middle and an end.

As mentioned, in most cases a myth narrates the events of the past, such as an important battle or the circumstances leading to the origins of a certain human community; they tell the tale of how a society came to be founded, or "the event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings'."¹⁸ This type of myth is usually called a "foundation myth" or an "origin myth."¹⁹ Nevertheless, a myth can also be future-oriented, dealing with an event that will take place in the future. It may warn against the extinction of a

certain community, or tell of the coming revolution, or of the arrival of a savior, a messiah. "If the future-oriented myth points to the end of 'normal' history, that which is known to us, then it is an 'eschatological myth'." ²⁰

But a myth is not simply a story; rather, it is a narrative in dramatic form. This, however, does not necessarily mean that myths are the product of pure fantasy: "Some myths do, of course, relate events which never occurred. But many myths...deal with people who really existed and with events that actually took place." ²¹

In order to appreciate the power of myth and its underlying functions in society, one should bear in mind that "In mythical thought and imagination we do not meet with individual confessions. A myth is an objectification of man's social experience, not his individual experience." ²² This is not to say that myths are devoid of the narrator's or the myth-maker's imprint, as we shall see below. What is implied here, is that myths are neither a product of the individual nor of man's unconscious or collective unconscious, as Freud and Jung have argued. ²³ Myths are "part of the resources of the whole community, a

sort of cultural furniture";²⁴ they are "not an aimless outpouring of vain imagination, but a hard-working, extremely important cultural force."²⁵ And above all, myths "are symbolic representations of the dominant configurations of the particular culture."²⁶ Myths, then, are not invented by the individual, but are imposed on him, and he comes to share in their possession by living and conversing with his fellows. They are the collective product of the group to which he belongs. They existed before him, and, when he dies, they will survive him. In a word, myths are an integral part of one's culture; they are the "cultural furniture" of the social group as a whole.

Hence, myths comply with one of the prerequisites of symbols, since they constitute an integral part of culture. But myths -- origin or eschatological -- are also essential for the survival of man, because, like symbols, they transmit conceptions which sustain man's existence in the ambiguous world by explaining to him his peculiar and unique reality.

I have already touched upon this cognitive-interpretive function of myth by noting that origin (or foundation) myths narrate the circumstances by which a

certain community was born. That is, myths locate the present of a certain society in the historical sequence, and thus provide society with notions to understand the reality of the present. A myth, Eliade writes, "is always an account of 'creation'; it relates how something was produced, began to be;"²⁷ Man, Eliade contends, "considers himself the end product of mythical history, that is, of a series of events that took place in illo tempore, the beginning of Time."²⁸ According to Eliade, the protagonists in myths are always "Supernatural Beings." They are known primarily by what they did in the "transcendent times of the 'beginnings'."²⁹ In other words, myths disclose for man the creative activity of "Supernatural Beings," in consequence of which a "sacred event" was established in "primordial time." Yet, Eliade writes,

Myths...narrate not only the origin of the World, of animals, of plants, and of man, but also the primordial events in consequence of which man became what he is today....If the world exists, if man exists, it is because Supernatural Beings exercised creative powers in the 'beginnings.' But after cosmogony and the creation of man other events occurred, and man as he is today is the direct result of those mythical events, he is constituted by those events....Man is what he is today because a series of events took place ab origine. The myths tell him these events and, in so doing, explain to him how and why he was constituted in this particular way.³¹

Whether or not myths portray the deeds of supernatural beings, Freud's account of the Oedipus myth, most familiar to us from Sophocles' famous tragedy, may clarify this interpretive function of origin myths (despite Freud's insistence that myth is a "personal confession"). Freud was struck by the fact that the two commandments of Totemism -- not to kill the totem animal and not to use a woman belonging to the same totem for sexual purposes -- agree in content with the two crimes of Oedipus who slew his father and took his mother to wife, and, on the other hand, with the child's two primal wishes, whose insufficient repression form the basis of all neuroses.³² What, therefore, renders Freud's a true origin myth, that is, a myth which explains the present reality, is that "There actually were acts of patricide, and from these are born blood-stained sons who inherit all the debilities of their murderous ancestors."³³

Thus, the power of myth is such that by telling its tale of a primordial happening it satisfies the question 'why?' which is directed to the present time. A myth narrates past events that are relevant to the here and now. In short, it explains the peculiar reality of a certain social group to which the myth belongs.

If myths explain reality, they equally transmit conceptions of how to cope with such a reality. By understanding how the present order came into being, and what was its meaning, man is able to fulfill his proper role in the circumstances brought about by those "primordial events." As Patai explains:

The explanations [a myth] supplies to the great questions that have agitated man...invariably contain an element of encouragement: a phenomenon, it tells us, as we encounter it today, has this and this as its basis, its reason, its origin, its meaning, or its purpose. Once in possession of these elucidations, man can better understand, accept and acquiesce phenomena that previously were baffling, disquieting and frightening....The duties, obligations, rights and expectations of man in relation to the physical, social and spiritual realms of his existence are all anchored in that period of origins of which the myth is the authoritative account.³⁴

Future-oriented myths, and particularly, eschatological myths, are also capable of informing man of how to come to grips with, and even change reality. Sorel offers an excellent examination of the function and role of futuristic myths.³⁵ Sorel argues that the most significant characteristic of a myth, is that it provides a vision of the future which makes practical sense of the present. It gives men a fixed point of reference to which they can express their feelings and explain their reality. Myths of the future, Sorel explains, "give an aspect of

complete reality to the hopes of immediate action by which...men can reform their desires, passions, and mental activity."³⁶ Hence, he says, modern revolutionary movements (such as Socialism) need an image of the future, a myth, to reassure them as to the final outcome of their struggle. In short, myths of the future, according to Sorel, are "means of acting upon the present."³⁷

The eschatological myths of the great monotheistic religions, which address the fundamental issues of evil and suffering in this world, also explain how to cope with reality, however unjust or inequitable it may be. Their message is reassuring and redemptive, for it points to the future victory, thanks to divine help, of those few just ones who suffer in the present. In short, the great eschatological myths enable men to endure their wronged reality; they may not explain how people can avoid suffering, but they may inform them of "how to make of physical pain, personal loss, worldly defeat...something bearable, supportable -- something as we say, sufferable."³⁸

Whether oriented to the past or to the future, a myth does not merely explain the circumstances of those to whom it is addressed or simply renders their experience and

reality more coherent. A myth is not just an account of the past or the future in the light of which the present can be understood and coped with, because, above all, it provides practical assistance, a guideline, for facing reality. Hence we approach the operative-behavioral, or exemplary function of myths.

Quoting the Spanish scholar Ortega Y Gasset, Mann writes that "the man of antiquity, before he did anything, took a step backwards, like the bull-fighter who leaps back to deliver the mortal thrust." The man of antiquity, Mann continues, "searched the past for a pattern into which he might slip as into a diving-bell, and being thus at once disguised and protected might rush upon his present problem."³⁹ In other words, when a man faces a burning problem he needs an exemplary, authoritative model, a precedent embodied in a myth, to identify with in order to solve it. And indeed, Mann contends, the greatest figures of human history were inclined, in the most crucial hours of their lives, to identify with particular historical models: Napoleon, for example, "at the period of his Eastern exploits...mythically counfounded himself with Alexander; while after he turned his face westward he is said to have declared: 'I am Charlemagne'."⁴⁰

Thus myths convey exemplary models for human behavior, for all significant human activities and institutions. A brief discussion of Eliade's interpretation of myth may, once again, clarify the point. Eliade believes that what happened in the mythical past, namely, the activity of "Supernatural Beings" in consequence of which a "sacred event" was born, is of practical significance, in that it is taken to be exemplary; it becomes the paradigm for how things should be done ever after. The main reason for this is the belief that the source of all life, strength and efficacy is the supernatural force at work in the beginning, in illo tempore, the force which brought about the mythical "sacred event".⁴¹ It is, according to Eliade, a corollary of this belief that, as things recede in time from their origin, they lose their vitality and strength, and eventually die. The only way to restore and regenerate things is therefore to repeat, or reenact, the mythical act which brought them into being in the first place -- to repeat the supernatural activity which created the "sacred event." In other words, what was done is not forever lost; it may repeat itself. Mythical time is, in short, reversible:

'Living' a myth...implies a genuinely
'religious' experience, since it differs from
the ordinary experience of everyday life. The
'religiousness' of this experience is due to
the fact that one re-enacts fabulous, exalting,

significant events....[O]ne ceases to exist in the everyday world and enters transfigured, auroral world impregnated with supernaturals' presence. What is involved is...a reiteration of [events]. The protagonists of the myth are made present, one becomes their contemporary. This also implies that one is no longer living in chronological time, but in primordial Time, the Time when the event first took place.⁴²

Any society, Eliade concludes, cannot dispense with myths, for what is essential in mythical behavior -- the exemplary pattern, the repetition, the reenactment of primordial time -- is "consubstantial with every human condition."⁴³ To sum up, by offering paradigmatic models, myths assure man that what he is about to do has already been done. This is to say, myths help men to overcome doubts as to the result of their undertakings in the present.

We see, then, that a myth satisfies the first two essentials of a symbol: it is a constituent part of a culture, and it interprets reality, while simultaneously indicating how to come to grips with it. But a myth also fulfills the third and final characteristic of symbols, inasmuch as it changes in reaction to the changes in the historical circumstances which it seeks to interpret and mold.

Brower is convinced that, "Although we commonly speak

of 'the Oedipus myth' or 'the Hercules myth,' and though anthropologists refer to mythical 'archetypes' or 'structures,' it can be said that there are no myths, only versions."⁴⁴ Indeed, a myth is an "utterance" made at a particular time and place. It has a meaning, and this meaning is determined by its context. In this respect, we can uncover what a myth means only by acquainting ourselves with the weltanschauung that prevailed at the time of its utterance. As Tudor observes,

A myth may imply all sorts of general attitudes and preconceptions which the myth-maker himself takes for granted because they form part of the climate of opinion or understanding of existence within which he works; and, if we are to understand what he says, we must certainly familiarize ourselves with this climate of opinion.⁴⁵

A corollary of this, is that myths are plastic rather than rigidly fixed, and variable rather than stable. They are shaped and reshaped by their narrators in accordance with their own premises and values and in response to their particular conception of the world. In a word, the meanings of myths depend entirely on the circumstances in which they are told. A myth is always told from the standpoint of the present, and this carries the implication that, as the circumstances in which men find themselves change, so they reconstruct their myths. Within

this context, Benedict sees all cultural phenomena, including myths, as being dynamic and flexible, because, as she understands it, man's actions are not merely determined by, but are also instrumental in determining, what his cultural pattern is.⁴⁶

Again, the reconstruction or transformation of myths is understandable only if one bears in mind their relation to the present state of affairs. If the content of myths is designed to interpret, evaluate and solve the predicaments of one's reality in the present, it follows that, as the reality of the present changes, the content of myths must change with it. Indeed, this is the only way a myth is able to retain its vitality as a problem-resolving "instrument" which is relevant to the here and now. A new reality must, therefore, bring forth a "new" myth; otherwise, a myth is bound to lose its appeal for man and fall into oblivion -- it would completely lose its practical value. By "new," however, I do not mean the creation of a wholly genuine myth to suit the changes of time. For a myth always maintains its structure. The myth's incorporated heroes and villains are always the same, and the myth's unity of time and place remains unaltered. It is only the protagonists' actions or, more precisely, the meanings of their actions, which are

constantly modified, adjusted, and reinterpreted. And, the purpose of these modifications is to create new conceptions which, in turn, allow man to better understand and come to grips with his changing reality. Thus myths may be regarded, in the course of time, as old bottles which contain new wine. They are only variants of an older myth, or "more or less marked modifications of a pre-existing text."⁴⁷ In short, myths "express the collective mentality of a given age."⁴⁸

Having established the characteristics of myths and their relation to symbols, there remain two interrelated issues that should be addressed here. These are, the role of myths as effective tools for mass mobilization and regime support, and the narratives in the Iranian khutbahs which I render as myths throughout this study.

The following observation by Patai, may serve as a starting point for the examination of the role of myths as essential and effective means of mass mobilization:

Whatever the origins of a myth...the power it can attain over the feeling, thinking, and acting of large groups of men in nothing short of frightening....So great is the power of myth that, if one chooses, it can compel man to deprive himself of pleasures, deny himself satisfaction, inflict suffering upon himself, mutilate his own body, sacrifice his manhood, and even destroy himself in the most painful

manner imaginable.⁴⁹

It is not difficult to imagine how an informed regime can become aware of such a potential power that a myth has over a people and how, in due time, it may try to advance its own political ends by appealing or even manipulating myths. This, however, does not explain the causes for this overwhelming influence of myths over human beings. The question thus remains, by what means does a myth achieve its power?

Belief," Bidney contends, "is essential to the acceptance of 'myth' and accounts for its effectiveness in a given cultural context"⁵⁰ Indeed, the key term for understanding why human beings are overpowered by myths is belief, that is, belief in the truthfulness of myths. This belief is a relatively simple phenomenon. Myths become believable if they are able, as shown above, to make sense of man's present experience -- if they are successful in telling the story of how things came about and how to behave in light of those things. And, indeed, for the believer, myths are not really myths but truths:

The myth defines itself by its own mode of being. It can only be grasped, as a myth, in so far as it reveals something as having been fully manifested, and this manifestation is at the same time creative and exemplary. A myth always narrates something as having really happened, as an event that took place.⁵¹

Hence, we can tell that a given account is a myth, not by the amount of truth it contains, but by the fact that it is believed to be true. Myths can be believed as true partly because the normal criteria for plausibility do not apply to the "sacred" world of primordial time and partly because a myth does, after all, deal with what is obviously real:

[T]he myth is regarded as a sacred story, and hence a 'true history,' because it always deals with realities. The cosmogonic myth is 'true' because the existence of the World is there to prove it; the myth of the origin of death is equally true because man's mortality proves it, and so on.⁵²

In short, the very facts a myth is supposed to explain are taken as evidence of the truthfulness of the myth.

If people truly believe that their respective myths are the absolute truth, how, then, can a given regime make use of them in order to advance its own political ends. Fredrich and Brezezinski believe that, because myths are typically tales concerned with past events, giving them special meaning and significance for the present, a myth reinforces "the authority of those who are wielding power in a particular society."⁵³ Indeed, if myth is believable it is likely to achieve precisely this. It may

be recalled, that a myth informs of the creation of a "sacred event" in "primordial time, an event which possesses all vitality and strength, for it was laid down by "Supernatural Beings." Moreover, a myth informs of the decline and expiration of the "sacred event" in the duration of time, in consequence of those fateful "primordial events" that occurred after the cosmogony.

A regime may therefore claim legitimacy by portraying its integral parts and institutions as a reenactment of a "sacred event" of "primordial time." This is to say, by claiming to be a repetition of a "sacred event" brought about by "Supernatural beings," possessing the vitality and efficacy of "primordial time," a regime may render itself as exemplary and, consequently, as worthy of emulation and perpetuation. In other words, a myth may have the conservative role of bestowing legitimacy on the existing political order. By manipulating the interpretive and exemplary instructions of a myth, a regime may cultivate in people a desire to defend the existing institutions and policies of the state, or at least to carry their burden. That is why Kluckhohn is convinced that myths "act as brakes upon the speed of culture change."⁵⁴

Myths of the future may also play a conservative political role. If a regime is, say, tyrannical, rendering the circumstances of the present intolerable for the bulk of society, it can, provided the myth is believable, claim that salvation will come only through divine intervention. The regime is thus bound to instill in the minds of its citizenry the notion that resistance is futile, that one must patiently endure hardship and affliction, for it is only the divine savior who will deliver the people in the End of Days.

But myths may also appear in a radical garb, serving to delegitimize and condemn institutions, groups and individuals, or to evoke people to revolt against an existing order. "Since Hesiod's days," Shklar observes,

the myth of origins has been a typical form of questioning and condemning the established order, divine and human, ethical and political. The myth of creation that Hesiod devised out of the depth of resentment has been a model for writers of similar inspirations. His imitators in antiquity were legion, and in the modern age both Rousseau and Nietzsche, to name to most notable, used creation myths to express their unlimited contempt for their world.⁵⁵

An origin myth can therefore display the present situation, brought about by a regime, as a deviation from the remote, yet ideal primordial past, or a regime's institutions as inconsistent with the primordial exemplary

pattern. It may render these institutions neither as worthy of repetition nor as a reenactment of primordial deeds. In a word, origin myths may, "supply compelling arguments for the abolition of undesirable institutions."⁵⁶

Such is also the case with future-oriented myths. It is clear, for example, that Marx's vision of the revolution of the proletariat "carries on one of the great eschatological myths of the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean world."⁵⁷ It is also clear that Marx's eschatological vision was not intended to perpetuate the existing order by allowing the final battles of the just to take place in the End of Time. Rather, Marx's revolutionary vision was designed to hasten the complete transformation of society here and now in the present age.

In addition, Sorel tells us that through myths of the future, each conflict in the present is seen as a prelude to the decisive battle destined to take place in the future. Catholics, Sorel writes, "have always pictured the history of the Church as a series of battles between Satan and the hierarchy supported by Christ; every new difficulty which arises is only an episode in a war which must finally end in the victory of Catholicism."⁵⁸ Thus,

myths of the future depict the future as a redeeming event which will take place perhaps in End of Time, but certainly through men's intervention and men's involvement in history. In other words, the End of Time, the great catastrophic event destined to alter the existing order of things, is a result, not of divine intervention, but of human actions, efforts and determination.

To sum up, a myth in the service of a given regime can establish the claim of a certain group to hegemony and sovereign independence. Yet, it might, on the contrary, encourage resistance or supply the arguments for the abolition of institutions and regimes. In short, myths can be employed either for "authorizing the continuance of... institutions, customs, rites and beliefs in the area where they are current, or [for] approving their alterations.⁵⁹

Having explained the practical, political usefulness of myth, I will now briefly clarify what sorts of myths will be traced in the khutbahs at hand, and discussed throughout all subsequent chapters. Fischer believes that the Iranian 'ulama' in Pahlavi Iran, "though courageously speaking out against the repression...of the state... seemed to be able to draw only on romantic visions of the

past and to have little creative sociological imagination."⁶⁰ Whether or not the 'ulama' in Iran lack "creative sociological imagination" is beyond the purport of this study. The fact remains, however, that they have been making, and still do make as the leaders of Islamic Iran, extensive appeals to the past, to the mythical "primordial time" (the dawn of Islam), "in order persuade their fellows, manipulate situations and achieve mastery, control, or political position."⁶¹

The appeal to cultural myths for these ends is particularly prevalent in the post-Pahlavi khutbah. This is only logical because, as myths are likely to enhance the legitimacy of a regime (as outlined above), they are also fit to be resorted to in the most important institution in Islamic Iran which serves as a legitimator of rulership -- the Friday congregational khutbah. What, then, are those myths which are harnessed by prayer leaders to the Islamic regime's campaign of mass mobilization and regime support?

The myths traced in the khutbahs and discussed throughout this study are all constituent parts of what might be called the complete cosmogonic myth of Shi'i Islam. The beginning part is that of the Prophet Muhammad

and the First Imam\Fourth Caliph 'Ali, respectively. Both are "Supernatural Beings" whose paradigmatic activity in "primordial time," in the "cosmogony" (or the dawn of Islam), had given rise to a "sacred event," an ideal Islamic government and an ideal community of believers. In short, the part of the Prophet and of 'Ali in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth is primarily concerned with what Eliade terms "an account of 'creation'," the creation of the faithful's "structure of reality" in the "cosmogony" -- the time possessing all vitality and efficacy.

The second part of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth concerns the lifetime careers of 'Ali's successors, the remaining leaders (Imams) of the Shi'ah -- to the exclusion of the twelfth in their line. Their part in the cosmogonic myth, and particularly that of the Third Imam, the martyred Husayn, deals with the "primordial events" that took place after the "cosmogony," that is, the events, to use Eliade's words again, "in consequence of which man became what he is today." This is to say, the Imams' part in the cosmogonic myth is meant to display the digression from the "sacred event," the expiration, in the course of time, of Islam's ideal government and society; the persecution of the Imams by the Sunnis and the usurpation of their rightful government, which account for the Shi'is present

reality.

The third and concluding part of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, is that of the Twelfth, Hidden Imam, whose return from occultation as the Mahdi, or the expected Messiah, in the End of Time, will bring redemption and elevation to the "oppressed" Shi'i sect. In other words, the concluding part of the cosmogonic myth is the eschatological myth of Shi'i Islam.

I have already noted on the myth's innate characteristic to transform in reaction to changes in the historical reality. The Shi'ah cosmogonic myth is no exception, as its most prevalent version in revolutionary Iran is also a direct result of the social and political changes brought to bear in Iran during the 1960's and the 1970's. The transformation of the myth's integral parts is discussed in detail in the following chapters. The practical, political value of the transformed myth for the Islamic regime is also examined in all subsequent chapters. It should be noted here, however, that the separate parts of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, as they emerged after the ascendancy of the 'ulama' to power, have been used in sermons to further the regime's two underlying objectives of political education -- enhancing

the legitimacy of clerical rule, and inciting the masses to revolutionary action.

Indeed, it may be recalled that a myth can either establish the claim of a certain group to power, or, on the contrary, encourage resistance and supply arguments for the abolition of institutions. As will be seen in the following chapters, the Islamic regime has demonstrated its skill in using the cosmogonic myth, both to sanctify its own political institutions, and thus enhance regime support, and to condemn its internal and external foes, and thus propel the masses to revolutionary action against them. And, as will be seen, the narrator of the myth, or in our case, the prayer leader, felt free to decide which parts of the myth to include in order to achieve these two political education objectives. He was free to construct his account of the myth by selecting those events which, in retrospect, were thought to be advancing his argument. In short, the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth was used for one purpose at one time and for a different purpose at another. Let's examine first how the cosmogonic myth has been utilized in sermons for inciting the masses to revolutionary action.

Notes to Chapter Two

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2. Raymond Firth, Symbols, Public and Private (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 15 [hereafter, Symbols].
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4. Carl G. Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," in Carl G. Jung (ed.), Man and His Symbols (New York: Laurel, 1968), p. 3.
5. Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 91 [hereafter, Religion].
6. Ibid., p. 93.
7. Clifford Geertz, "Ethos, World View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," in Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, p. 129 [hereafter, Ethos].
8. Clifford Geertz, Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 95.
9. Clifford Geertz, "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man," in Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, p. 45.
10. Firth, Symbols, p. 19.
11. S. K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 287 [hereafter, Philosophy]. [Emphasis in the original.]
12. Geertz, "Ethos," pp. 140-41.

13. Firth, Symbols, p. 78. Also see, Langer, Philosophy, pp. 43ff.
14. For a discussion on the correlation between social change and the transformation of symbols embodying ideologies, see Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," pp. 47-76.
15. C. Wright Mills pointed to the central place of master symbols: those in authority attempt to justify their rule by linking it with widely believed-in moral symbols and sacred emblems. See his, The Sociological Imagination (New York: Grove, 1961), pp. 36-7.
16. Raphael Patai, Myth and the Modern World (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 9 [hereafter, Patai].
17. On the origins of myth see, Robert A. Georges, "Epilogue," in Robert A. Georges (ed.) Studies on Mythology (Homewood: The Dorsey Press, 1968), p. 228-229, and; Patai, pp. 35-36.
18. Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, Trans. William R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 5.
19. On the Roman foundation myth, see Henry Tudor, Political Myth (New York, Washington & London: Praeger, 1972), chapter three [hereafter, Tudor].
20. Emmanuel Sivan, Arab Political Myths (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1988), p. 9. [In Hebrew.] For an analysis of eschatological myths, see D. R. Bultmann, History and Eschatology (Edinburgh: The Gifford Lectures, 1957). On eschatological myths in the Middle Ages, see Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of Millennium (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961). For an examination of the great Judeo-Christian eschatological myths see F. E. and F. P. Manuel, "Sketch for a Natural History of Paradise," in C. Geertz (ed.), Myth, Symbol and Culture (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1971), pp. 83-128.
21. Tudor, pp. 137-38.
22. Ernest Cassirer, The Myth of the State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), p. 47. [Emphasis in the original.]

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27. Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 6. [Emphasis in the original.]
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29. Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 6.
31. Ibid., pp. 11, 92. [Emphasis in the original.]
32. Freud, pp. 236ff.
33. Judith N. Shklar, "Subversive Genealogies," in Geertz (ed.), Myth, Symbol and Culture, p. 147 [hereafter, Shklar].
34. Patai, pp. 68-70.
35. George Sorel, Reflections on Violence, Trans. T. E. Hulme & J. Roth (New York: Collier Books, 1961) [hereafter, Sorel].
36. Ibid., p. 125.
37. Ibid., p. 131.
38. Geertz, "Religion," p. 104.
39. Thomas Mann, "Freud and the Future," in H. A. Murray (ed.), Myth and Mythmaking (New York: Braziller, 1960), p. 373.

40. Ibid.

41. Eliade, Myth and Reality, pp. 5-6.

42. Ibid., p. 19. [Emphasis in the original.] A detailed discussion on the reenactment of myths is found in Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return, Trans. W. R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), pp. 35ff.

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45. Tudor, p. 24.

46. Ruth Benedict, "Introduction to Zuni Mythology," in Georges (ed.), Studies on Mythology, pp. 102-136.

47. Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 146.

48. A. MacIntyre, "Myth," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by P. Edwards (London: Macmillan, 1967).

49. Patai, pp. 105, 171.

50. David Bidney, "Myth, symbolism and Truth," Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 68 (October-December, 1955), p. 294.

51. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, pp. 14-15. [Emphasis in the original.]

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53. Carl Fredrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy, (New York & London: Praeger, 1961), p. 99 [hereafter, Fredrich and Brzezinski].

54. Kluckhohn, p. 152.

55. Shklar, p. 130.

56. Tudor, p. 139.

- 57. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, p. 25.
- 58. Sorel, p. 78.
- 59. Patai, p. 2.
- 60. Fischer, Iran, p. 10.
- 61. Ibid., p. 7.

Chapter III:
ACTIVISM AND REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL:
A NEW CONCEPTION OF A MYTHICAL PAST

A. Introduction

This is the word of our victorious nation -- resistance is our everyday slogan (In sukhān-i millat-i piruz-i mā ast -- muqavamat shi'ar-i har ruz-i mā ast).

These words, jointly shouted by the crowd attending the Friday sermon in Tehran,¹ underline the changing perceptions and values in Iran brought about by the Islamic Revolution. In essence, they are an integral part of the Iranian regime's campaign to solidify the transformation of the once prevalent notion of Islam (particularly Shi'ism) as a fatalistic, apolitical creed into an ideology of revolution that permeates all spheres of life, especially politics, and inspires its subscribers to rise up against all manifestations of oppression, exploitation, and injustice.

This world view of struggling and politicized Islam, as originally propagated by Ayatollah Khomeini, is innovative and creative in Shi'i history and thought.²

Even though we find both quietist and activist groups and doctrines among the Shi'is,³ it is commonly held that "the de facto depoliticization of the Imami or Twelver Shi'ah sect of Islam...occurred as early as the mid-eighth century, when the Sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, reportedly renounced, albeit temporarily, political rule, and the political functions of the Imam ([such as] declaring war against the enemies of Islam...) were indefinitely postponed."⁴ The doctrine of the Imamate too, as formulated in the second century of Islam, while theoretically denying legitimacy to any form of government, was rarely used to overthrow it, and in effect served to suppress, rather than incite, social discontent and political dissent. Moreover, the doctrine of the occultation (ghaybah) of the Imam, promulgated in 873-74, further depoliticized the sect.⁵ As Sachedina explains,

...the belief in the ghaybah of the Imam and his eventual return (raja'ah) at a favorable time helped the Shi'ites to endure under difficult circumstances and to hope for reform pending the return of the Mahdi. By the end [of the seventh century], the futility of gaining ascendancy by radical means had become clear to the Shi'ites. In consequence, the belief in the ghaybah of the [Imam] held obvious attraction for those who now looked forward to the happening of the promised events accompanying the emergence of the hidden Imam. Such messianic expectations, consequently, did not require the Shi'ites to oppose the establishment actively; rather they were required to remain on the alert at all times... constantly re-evaluating contemporary

historical life, on the basis of the apocalyptic traditions which related the signs regarding the Imam's reappearance.⁶

The suppression of extremist tendencies and political dissent in the Shi'i sect was further enhanced through the introduction of the practice of taqiyah ("dissimulation" of "true" faith), which enabled and, in fact, encouraged the faithful to "coexist peacefully, if not collaborate with, the Sunni state."⁷ The Sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765), reportedly made taqiyah a religious obligation, accentuating the moderation of the to be twelver sect, saying, "Fear for your religion and protect it with taqiyah, for there is no faith when there is no taqiyah."⁸ Taqiyah, thus, "made for political quietism by removing the motivation for assertiveness and conspicuous fulfillment of religious obligation under inconvenient circumstances."⁹

Mainstream twelver Shi'ism persisted as the religion of the quiescent who, shunning politics, submits to the authority of the state, to and throughout the Safavid period (1501-1722), when the monarchs were named the "shadows of God on earth" and when the clergy ('ulama') were willingly coopted by the government.¹⁰ Even in the Qajar period (1796-1925), when prominent 'ulama' emerged

as the champions of the nation's grievances and consequently took part in the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911),¹¹ "rare were those who called for...another dynasty to replace the Qajars. Neither the institution of the monarchy itself nor the secular state were questioned. Only the Qajar policies were."¹²

Religiously-inspired or 'ulama'-headed movements have amply proved their ability to mobilize the people against the state in the early 1950's and, again, in the early 1960's (see chapter five). Yet, it was by and large Muhammad Reza Shah's (d. 1980) reform program in the late 1960's and the 1970's, his quest to give the nation a secular cultural identity displacing Islam and the growing autocratic nature of his rule, which helped the mainstream 'ulama', and especially Khomeini, "reverse the official Shi'ah attitude of acquiescence, and recapture the early Imam's spirit of revolt against the 'unrighteous' government."¹³ Thus, modernization finally aroused the Iranian jurists to retreat from their tradition of opposing extremism and rise up against the state which was determined to annihilate their social role:

All the main features of [pre-eighth century] Shi'i millenarianism were fully invoked: Jihad... against the infidel; the readiness to die a martyr for a holy cause; the strong conviction that a true and pure Islamic order

would and should replace the corrupt and evil government; the charismatic appeal of the leader who lays claim to the niyabat-i Imam (vicegerency). The fugaha who previously were instrumental in the depoliticization of Shi'ism and the secularization of politics, now turned into messianic figures aiming at establishing a theocracy, the rule of the Sage on earth.¹⁴

Thus, Shi'i Islam has, once again, emerged as an ideology of social and political revolution, practically stripped of its spiritual and metaphysical meaning. In short, in the hands of the Islamic regime (and of the Islamic opposition movement before it) Islam emerged as a world-embracing ideology in which "politics displaces theology and political goals acquire priority over doctrinal concerns."¹⁵ However, if in the past this conception of Islam was instrumental in mobilizing the religious-minded masses for the struggle against the Shah and in legitimizing the 'ulama's bid for political power, once this was achieved, the notion of dynamic Islam was needed to keep up mass support and to prevent religious-revolutionary zeal from waning in the Islamic regime's confrontations with growing internal opposition and external enemies.

This chapter examines how this transformation in the conception of Islam was accommodated by an equal shift in

that part of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth which is concerned with the lifetime careers of the Shi'i Imams. In a word, it shows that in revolutionary Iran, "the conventional Shi'i view of the tragic Imam figure as a martyr, a shahid, [was] transformed into a conquering hero, a qahriman."¹⁶ We should bear in mind that the notion of revolutionary and militant Islam, as propagated by the Islamic regime, was not a return to "an old belief system, but a radically reinterpreted, ideologized conception of the old system."¹⁷ A reinterpretation of the myths embodying this belief system was therefore the necessary result, inasmuch as they are shaped and reshaped by their narrators in accordance with their own premises and values and in response to their particular conception of the world (see chapter two).

Section B of the chapter offers an overview of the prevailing militant interpretations of Islam as expounded in Friday sermons. This is intended to provide the reader with the necessary information about the current Shi'i belief system (or world view) as a condition for appreciating how and why the myths which make that system have been reconstructed along with it. Section C will then examine the reshaping of the Imams myth, its accommodation to the reinterpreted belief system. More precisely, it

will trace the transformation of those parts in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth which deal with the Shi'i Imams, with the exception of the third in their line, Imam Husayn (to be discussed in chapter four), and the Twelfth Imam (to be discussed in chapter seven).

It is noteworthy that the present chapter and the one which follows (dealing with Imam Husayn) are closely related. The protagonists discussed in both chapters have been recast to accommodate the new revolutionary vision of Islam and, accordingly, they all turned into conquering heroes endowed with militant attributes. Likewise, the new attributes attached to the protagonists in both chapters were designed to legitimize the 'ulama's revolutionary bid for political power. They were equally designed to keep alive the revolutionary fervor of the masses with the aim of (1) inciting them to action against the republic's enemies; and (2) making them lose consciousness of the mounting social and economic problems caused by the revolutionary process. Finally, the protagonists in both chapters take part in the complete Shi'i cosmogonic myth, as discussed in chapter two. Nonetheless, it seems that the importance of the Karbala paradigm as the foundation myth of Shi'i Islam and its cognitive and exemplary significance, particularly during the struggle against the

Shah, and later, in promoting revolutionary zeal against the enemies of the Islamic regime, justifies an independent discussion on the subject.

B. "Islam is a Revolutionary Creed"

With the demise of the monarchical order in 1979, the Iranian 'ulama', now the political leaders of the "new" Iran, resumed their campaign to establish Shi'i Islam as a religion of revolution, of holy war and of martyrdom -- as a progressive, dynamic, liberating and worldly-oriented ideology, enabling true Muslims to realize their ideal on earth. They continuously denounced the "'ulama' of the court" -- the "servants of tyrannical and despotic rulers" -- for corrupting the "true" essence of Islam, by introducing it as a reactionary and stagnant creed devoid of worldly usefulness and retaining only its spiritual, metaphysical and other-worldly meanings.

Numerous Friday sermons delivered since their formal reinstitution in July 1979, were aimed at displaying Shi'ism as the religion of struggle and sacrifice. Common to these sermons, is the mentioned above condemnation of the akhund'ha-'i darbari ("'ulama' of the court") for

meddling with "Traditions (hadith) found in the books of both the Shi'is and the Sunnis" in order to "invite Muslims to submission and quiescence vis a vis oppressive and tyrannical rulers." The same orator, Hojjat al-Islam Muhammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, speaking to the congregation before the official sermon began, continued: "The Qur'an invites people to rise up against despotic governments and oppressive rulers. The hadith we attained...from the great [scholars] of Islam [call on Muslims] to reproach submission and indifference in the face of the rulers' injustices...[and] to revolt in order to institute equality and justice."¹⁸ In another speech before the Friday sermon, Reyshahri explained the motives of those 'ulama' who have busied themselves in "alterations" of the "pure and real" (nab va-vaqi'i) revolutionary Islam. Given the service they render "oppressive" (istikbari) rulers, he claimed, they wish to conceal the inherent anti-istikbari nature of Islam, "which had always opposed and struggled against the rule of istikbar." By doing so, they found the best means of "stupefying" the minds of the Muslims, and hence facilitated the consolidation of the rule of oppressive powers in Iran and the Muslim world at large.¹⁹

Hence the need, prayer leaders reiterated, to reveal

the true revolutionary nature of Islam in order to realize, as Hojjat al-Islam Sayyid 'Ali Khameneh'i claimed (February 29, 1980), that Islam is not "reactionary," that, in essence, "nothing is more progressive than Islam." Indeed, Khameneh'i asserted, gone are the days when Islam was seen as the "opiate of the masses"; for, just as the Islamic Revolution had proven, it is a "religion and a doctrine capable of awakening thirty six million people from their centuries of sleep under oppression," and of "humiliating" the enemy.²⁰ Likewise, Hojjat al-Islam 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani denounced (September 25, 1981) "the school of thought of Marx and Lenin" for conceiving Islam (and religion in general) as "the opiate of nations," thus presenting a distorted image of God's religion. Rafsanjani complained: Marx and Lenin (and their followers) defined religion as a "narcotic" devised to keep the oppressed at arm's length from struggle. They told the masses, "God has His ways, this is fate (tagdir), this is how [things are]...and people cannot set themselves in motion." The Islamic Revolution, however, verified the factitiousness of such "allegations." It has demonstrated that religion is not a narcotic, "but rather it is the greatest stimulant (muharrak) of the masses...."²¹

According to some prayer leaders, the disclosure of the true, revolutionary Islam was achieved single-handedly by the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini. Before the revolution, they explained, the nation knew of "the struggles and the heroism of the Muslims at the advent of Islam," but these "values were concealed in the depth of their souls." The Iranian nation heard of the "justice [and] the self sacrifice of the Muslims in the beginning of Islam and of the Imams," and Khomeini strove to bring this "inward" knowledge up to the surface. Khomeini told the people, "You were led astray, and your greatest misfortune is that you forgot Islam." These words, prayer leaders claimed, took possession of the minds and hearts of the people and "set them in motion." Indeed, they concluded, "the most important factor in our victory was the very same revival of the values of Islam and faith."²²

Once the true essence of Islam was revealed, it became manifest that it aims at an everlasting revolution. Even the Qur'an, as Khameneh'i noted in June 6, 1980, explicitly commands, "Rise up in Allah's way in two's and singly, then ponder" (34:46). In other words, he explained, the people should rise up at once whether they are alone or joined by others; nothing can be achieved by

sitting down or by observing events from the distance.²³
 In short, Islam and revolution are interchangeable and dependent on one another; without Islam there is no revolution and without revolution there is no Islam.²⁴

Indeed, Islam meant revolution from its advent. Prior to its appearance in the Arabian Peninsula, Khameneh'i asserted (November 1980), the people of the world had been under all sorts of "captivities and vexations." Fortunately, "Islam came [and] liberated the people." This is why the Qur'an says that the Prophet came "and liberate[d] from them their burden and the shackles which were upon them" (7:157). The Prophet came in order "to liberate the people from the vice of a few powers." Indeed, Khameneh'i continued, the Prophet did not allow internal and despotic rulers to oppress the people.²⁵

Islam, then, is the most effective "ideology" of revolution and the best "agent" for setting people in motion. No ideology (be it "Marxism") and no agent (be it "class" or "economy"), with the exception of Islam, can bring into existence "powerful movements." Indeed, only Islam is capable of "stimulating" men "to struggle...to jihad, to martyrdom (shahadat)," while other world views and philosophies leave men "blind and deaf, without

will...fatalistic and submissive."²⁶

This is so because, as opposed to other schools of thought, Islam endows man with a free will. Man is autonomous in regard to his social action and social choices, while the "materialists," for instance, view man's will as being determined and therefore not autonomous.²⁷ Prayer leaders usually supported their argument by the two Qur'anic verses, "Surely, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition" (13:11); and, "If you help Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet" (47:7). With respect to 13:11, Rafsanjani pointed (February 1982) to the verb "change" (yughayyiru) in the part which reads "until they change their own condition," indicating that it is an "active verb." Thus, he claimed, "we understand that [man's] is not a deterministic movement (harakat-i jabri), but rather a voluntary movement (harakat-i ikhtiyari) that should be initiated by society itself, by the people themselves." According to Islam, he concluded, "the basis of a revolution and the condition for the continuation of a revolution...is man."²⁸ In short, man was endowed with free will so he may rise up in revolt against the "oppressors" (satamgaran). As Rafsanjani argued in May 1988:

God refuses to solve all [problems] on the basis of a miracle. The oppressors do not seize power...all at once and, in this respect, the people share the blame for allowing them to take possession of the government. If the people of Iran would not have revolted in 1357 [1979] against the monarchical regime of the Shah, it would have been impossible to erase it from the pages [of history]....When the instruments of power fall in the hands of istikbar they gradually become stronger if the people do not rise up [against them]; this is a divine tradition.²⁹

The second verse ("If you help Allah He will help you and make firm your feet") was usually interpreted by prayer leaders as an invitation to struggle, in spite of existing hardships, leading, through God's grace, to a destined victory. Thus, the Iranian people must continue their revolution (despite obstacles and defeats, and, say, plots devised by the United States) until it reaches its final destination.³⁰ This is because the continuation of the revolution in its different manifestations (such as sacrificing one's life and resisting the United States and the "unbelievers" in Kurdistan) means "helping God"; and "because of this help, God will help you" to gain a final victory.³¹

In order to pronounce the inherent revolutionary nature of Islam, prayer leaders attributed militant and dynamic meanings to two Islamic terms -- taqva (or its

Arabic equivalent, taqwa -- "devoutness," "piety") and sabr ("patience" or "self-possession") -- traditionally devoid of any activist connotations and perhaps even implying moderation and restraint. Rafsanjani, for instance, distinguished (June 1982) between "negative" (manfi) and "positive" (musbat) taqvas, claiming the the first is merely "outward taqva" since it only implies "fast, prayer and the indulgence in other externals." This type of taqva, he argued, was displayed by some 'ulama' during the struggle against the Shah:

They observed religion outwardly, and they were also devout [outwardly]....When the struggle against the Shah began, a number [of these people] imagined that taqva means that they have no business with other people. They read their prayers, they fasted...and they lectured their lessons...and many people considered them devout scholars....If we want to be pious (muttaqi) like those gentlemen, like those [people] who declared struggle as unlawful, today this very same university [of Tehran] would have remained...a filth-house, as well as the streets...radio, television, the government -- all would have remained filthy.

Negative taqva therefore means "indifference to social affairs," imagining "that success will come after all." According to Rafsanjani, this type of taqva, resulting in life in "seclusion in a cave, a madrasah, a mosque or a convent," is, in effect, "anti-taqva." For, real, positive taqva, means "shouting the cries" of battle against Israel and the munharifin [the "corrupted," the "deviators" from

the straight path], while at the same time lecturing lessons, fasting and praying. Thus, taqva is first and foremost "presence in the arena." Indeed, Rafsanjani concluded, "This revolution was the result of positive taqva."³²

The term sabr was defined by prayer leaders in a similar fashion. For instance, Khameneh'i commenced with his interpretation of the term (October 1979) by citing the Qur'anic verse "Enjoin on each other sabr" (103:3). He then complained that there are some Arabic terms (sabr among them) which "lose" their "correct meaning" when transferred to the Persian language. Hence, we may encounter a man who understands the term as meaning "I'm sitting down, making sabr my profession." This is to say, Khameneh'i explained, people who are not familiar with Arabic might imagine that sabr means the following:

Sit down in [the] corner and be indifferent toward all events, difficulties and issues; [even] if they inflict a blow on your head, don't say 'Ouch!' Be patient (sabr kun). They plundered your possessions, they squandered [your] resources, [your] wealth...and [your] culture -- sit down, be patient; God willing Imam-i Zaman [the Hidden Imam] will arrive and correct everything. Be patient mister, be patient.

Fortunately, however, Khameneh'i assured, sabr means not the above definition, but rather "constancy and

perseverance (paydari va-istiqamat) in the face of events." Sabr, he said, is when man is constantly in search of the way, when man constantly struggles and encounters the enemy, hardships and plots -- when man never gives respite to the enemy and is always on guard against it. In short, sabr denotes "struggle and jihad against imperialism and global Zionism"; "constancy and perseverance" as well as "giving martyrs" for a just cause.³³

In view of such a conception of Islam, it is no wonder that prayer leaders portrayed it as the most "formidable weapon" in the possession of the Iranian people, the "nightmare" of all of Iran's enemies. Hence, in the first Friday sermon in post-Pahlavi Iran (July 27, 1979), Ayatollah Sayyid Mahmud Taleqani praised the Iranian nation as the "most powerful nation in the world." He termed the Iranian people saff, a "line," a "tier," equipped only with "truth" (haqq), "pure faith" and "divine decree," which is why "our enemies are terrified."³⁴ In this respect, the enemy is also terrified of the mosque: they saw "how you laid down your clenched fists on their heads from the mosques."³⁵ They are also frightened because they very well know that "blood," "resoluteness," and "steadfastness" have always

been the lot of Islam, and therefore, of the Islamic nation of Iran too.³⁶

Likewise, prayer leaders depicted the triumphant struggle against the Shah as a struggle "with no parallel in history": the people, they claimed, were devoid of "military means, propaganda machinery and...external support," and they were able to oust the "tyrannical" (taghuti) power of the Shah, who enjoyed the world's support, global opinion and the most sophisticated weapons, only by virtue of their "faith." Doubtlessly, prayer leaders announced, "The Iranian nation let the world understand that it is possible to gain a victory without armaments and only with the power of faith."³⁷ The Iranian nation is therefore prepared to stand up against every aggression; it holds the sharpest weapon, which is "the weapon of faith and of the reliance on Islam...[and] tawhid [the unity of God]."³⁸ Surely, it will gain a victory in every confrontation: "And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand, if you are believers" (the Qur'an, 3:139).³⁹

Having examined the vision of Islam as presented by the Islamic regime, let's proceed now and look into the reinterpretation of those parts of the Shi'i cosmogonic

myth which accompany and accommodate this transformation.

C. A Battle Against All Odds:

The Mythological Heroes of Shi'i Islam Reinterpreted

The political careers of the Shi'i Imams is known to have ended in gloomy defeats, in repeated failure to regain their usurped and "rightful" government. As the "politically impotent"⁴⁰ leaders of of their community, they gradually came to define their own leadership (Imamat) of the community "as a divinely designated authority based on peculiar religious qualifications, not on a political claim."⁴¹ Accordingly, they continually reminded their partisans that the time was not ripe for the establishment of their reign, and that they had to live under existing temporal authority, however oppressive it may be. The futility of previous 'Alid revolts and the persecution of the Imams by the political authorities resulted in their acquiescence to political powers and in the belief that only God, through his "redeemer" (al-Qa'im), would wipe out injustice at the appropriate, indefinite time. It is therefore safe to assert, that during the period of the Shi'i Imams "there was no

organized party of followers and no underground revolutionary activities with the aim of making them caliphs."⁴²

Thus, the political defeats of the Imams, their mundane sufferings and hardships, and, consequently, their martyrdom, came to be regarded by successive Shi'i generations as a model of devotion to God and of compliance with the divine decree. Their suffering on earth was taken as a trial of their confidence in God -- and the more they persisted in their faith, it was maintained, the more they suffered. Indeed, the Shi'is argued, had the Imams' faith been feeble, God would not have tested them with such harsh tribulations. Accordingly, the Imams' reward in the hereafter was seen as having a direct relation to their suffering on earth. And because they endured the most difficult hardships, Allah compensated them with the greatest reward in heaven. The Imams' grief was therefore conceived as a means of demonstrating their attachment to God; and because they obediently accepted God's will, God recompensed them in the hereafter as they deserved.

There is no doubt that historically, the Shi'ah have been "preconditioned to see the negative, the sad, the

tragic and those who are persecuted. The Shi'ah see themselves in a passive situation as people who are and have been acted upon."⁴³ Thus, for many of the Imams' followers too, "this world is a world of suffering and sorrow; it is indeed the House of Sorrows."⁴⁴ Accordingly, the Imams have always provided the faithful with an explanation of their existential predicament in the present and, particularly, the means of coping with their dire reality. A myth, it may be recalled (see chapter two), is both creative and exemplary: it "tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence" -- "it relates how something was produced, began to be";⁴⁵ and, it becomes the "paradigm" for how things should be done ever after, and consequently "repeatable," for it "serves as a model, and by the same token as a justification, for all human actions."⁴⁶

Hence, although activist groups and individuals are common to the political experience of the Shi'ah, there were always a substantial number of believers who took upon themselves to emulate and reenact the Imams' way -- to endure suffering and hardships patiently as a divine decree and as God's test of the firmness of their faith. They never dared to ask why "the righteous suffer and the wicked thrive," believing that their suffering was

destined to gain for them an appropriate reward in the hereafter. In other words, by repeatedly sharing or reenacting the Imams' agony and sorrow, they aimed at redemption and eternal bliss in heaven. Their orientation was therefore otherworldly, while any immediate action to change their own condition here on earth was not considered. By showing how the reality came into being, the Imams betrayed the futility of struggle against injustice, and by serving as models for all human actions, they motivated the believers to survive somehow in the wicked world, and to put their trust in Allah and in salvation -- not in their worldly lives, but in the hereafter.

The emergence of Shi'i Islam as an ideology of revolution committed to action and designed to change the condition of the believers here and now, was inevitably accompanied by the reshaping of the Imams' myth. Henceforth, all Shi'is were called upon to emulate their mythological ancestors, not as tragic, pathos arousing personalities, but as heroes, staunch warriors and revolutionary figures -- the Imams' failure to realize their goal and win back their usurped government notwithstanding.⁴⁷ Hence, if the ontological, interpretive dimension of the Imams' myth retained its

previous function (explaining the inferior state of the Shi'ah as a persecuted, "acted upon" sect), its exemplary dimension now directed the faithful to set forth and take immediate action to change their existential predicament for the better.

The effort to advance revolutionary zeal and activism by means of appeals to the reinterpreted myth of the Imams resumed in Friday sermons following the ascendancy of Khomeini's people to power. First, in order to show that the Imams' militancy, and by implication, the 'ulama's in twentieth century Iran, was a continuation of, rather than a departure from, Islamic tradition, prayer leaders turned to depict all the prophets of the Abrahamic line, from Abraham down to the Prophet of Islam, as paradigms of revolutionary Islamic identity. Thus, Hojjat al-Islam Amini informed his audience (May 1984) that,

...Moses had revolted against the Pharaohs; Abraham against Nimrod and the Nimrods; Jesus against the tyrants...of his time; and Muhammad ...too, delivered the people from the hands of oppressive rulers. In contrast to what some self-interested people say -- that the prophets had always been the instrument...of oppressors and rulers -- they had always...stood up against the taghuts ["idolators"].⁴⁸

Likewise, Hojjat al-Islam Falsafi announced in his speech before the Friday sermon (July 1982), that "all the prophets, that is, [all] one hundred twenty-four thousand

prophets...struggled to overthrow the oppressors (mustakbarin) in the support of the oppressed (mustaz'afin)." And, since myth is repeatable and mythological time reversible, Falsafi presented the Islamic Revolution as a reenactment of the prophets' revolutionary efforts: "Today," Falsafi asserted, "the 'ulama' of Islam [are] following the Noble Prophet by supporting the mustaz'afin and overthrowing the mustakbarin."⁴⁹ Similarly, Khameneh'i informed his audience (August 1980) that "one of the important goals of the prophets' mission [was] to rise up against injustice (zulm) and oppression (satamqaran)," and "to invite the people to revolt against oppression and oppressive [rulers]." He then went on to say: "Our Islamic Revolution...was therefore a resumption (tadavvum) of the revolution of the prophets, [because it] has stood up against injustice from its inception...[against] the...oppressors who ruled Iran."⁵⁰

Revolt was therefore "the aim of all the prophets...[and] the Imams too, pursued the same goal."⁵¹ Even under intense repression the Imams confronted "the enemies of God and the taghuts, and they all waged political struggles." Indeed, "the meaning of Imamat in the doctrine of the Shi'ah is political

struggle."⁵² More particularly, all the Imams (and by implication, the 'ulama' of this age) struggled for the establishment of an Islamic government: "They struggled, they waged jihads, they endured persecution, imprisonment banishment and martyrdom" for this cause.⁵³

Within this context, Rafsanjani censured those 'ulama' "and other pious persons," who imagine, "albeit with good intentions," that during their lifetime the Imams had not stressed "struggle and combat for the sake of seizing the government." These people, Rafsanjani complained, wrongly contend that the Imams "used justifications" for their quietist stand, claiming that they "were expecting [only] the Mahdi to return and reform the world." According to Rafsanjani, these "pious people" practiced quietism during the struggle against the Shah, because of their "misconception" of the "Imams' virtues": "They thought that government is the duty of the Imam-i Zaman only," and they therefore concluded that the preceding Imams had been "forbearing" and "remained under the yoke of oppression"; they demanded that "we too, should remain patient and leave the government in the hands of others until the coming of the Hidden Imam."⁵⁴ However, prayer leaders argued, the falsity of such notions is revealed once the careers of each of the individual Imams is examined.

Doubtlessly, such an examination will clearly show that during their lifetime the Imams were totally devoted to "jihad in the path of God" (jihad fi-sabil Allah).⁵⁵

The first is 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), the first in the line of the twelve "rightful" Shi'i Imams and the fourth Muslim Caliph. 'Ali is usually acclaimed in sermons for his endless efforts and struggles on behalf of the Prophet of Islam. Even as a child, it was argued, 'Ali defended the Prophet under the most crucial and dangerous conditions. During the wars of the Prophet, and especially in the battle of Badr (624), 'Ali "brought disbelief (kufr) down to their knees." In the Battle of Uhud (625), 'Ali "rescued the Prophet" from certain death. Moreover, during the conquest of Mecca in 630 "'Ali gained a glorious victory [for Islam] and smashed the idols...the symbols of polytheism (shirk) and disbelief."⁵⁶

It is thus not surprising that throughout 'Ali's lifetime, he was never afraid of any battle and he never grew feeble in his confrontations with the enemies of Islam. As 'Ali himself reportedly proclaimed: "Even if all the Arabs were to line up against me...I will not flee from this multitude."⁵⁷ Thus, 'Ali never laid down his sword; nor has he shirked from struggle, even if all the

odds were against him. "Don't say I'm alone and no one stands by my side," he allegedly reproached his army.⁵⁸

According to prayer leaders, 'Ali's resoluteness and bravery vis a vis the "enemies of Islam" was reflected in his attitude toward his most staunch foe, the Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiyah (reigned, 661-680), and in his will and testament to his sons Hasan and Husayn, the second and third Imams respectively. With respect to 'Ali's dealings with Mu'awiyah, Hojjat al-Islam Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Yazdi told his audience (July 17, 1982),

We know that the first difficulty [facing] the government of 'Ali was Mu'awiyah. Some people urged ['Ali] to behave gently toward Mu'awiyah [and to conclude a compromise with him] until such time when his [own] government would stabilize. But ['Ali] declared in response: 'I cannot endure in my government people like Mu'awiyah for even one minute'.⁵⁹

Accordingly, 'Ali is said to have included the following words in his will to his two sons and successive Imams: wa-kuna lill-zalim khasman. And, according to Khameneh'i's personal and somewhat liberal translation and exposition, "Be an enemy of the oppressor, whoever he may be; don't say we have no business with anyone -- Islam doesn't allow this. Recognize the oppressor, and be his enemy."⁶⁰

The militancy, revolutionary action and bravery of

'Ali thus established, prayer leaders now urged the people to emulate his example and follow his activist line. This took place especially during the American hostages crisis (November 1979-January 1981) and the consequent foiled U.S. rescue attempt (April 1980), when the issue "initially reinforced revolutionary zeal and augmented faith in the irresistible force of the revolution"⁶¹. Accordingly, 'Ali was quoted as proclaiming jihad a "gate of the gates of paradise" (bab min abwab al-jannah), which is why the Iranian nation should not and cannot surrender to American aggression. The nation, it was argued, is not afraid of U.S. economic sanctions or of U.S. military threats, for 'Ali had taught them to remain unified and firm against their enemies.⁶² Later, when concern was voiced over the possibility of a second rescue mission, 'Ali was once again harnessed to the revolutionary cause. This time, he was quoted as saying, "I'm not like an animal that is swallowed while in sleep." This is to say, it is not easy to defeat the Iranian nation; just like 'Ali, they are constantly on guard, and they will not hesitate to take up weapons and resist the aggressive designs of the United States.⁶³

The same exemplary attributes, allegedly passed by 'Ali to the people of Iran, were introduced once again

during the Iran-Iraq war (September 1980-August 1988). For instance, while addressing the inhabitants of regions suffering from Iraqi missile attacks, urging them not to lose heart and to maintain their resoluteness in the face of Iraqi aggressions, Ayatollah 'Abd al-Karim Musavi Ardebili spoke of 'Ali's lifetime and said:

The political and physical pressures [imposed] on 'Ali by the enemies [of Islam] and even by those who apparently were not his enemies, could not have diminished 'Ali's resistance. [And today] our people have learned from 'Ali [how to] resist and how to stand firm.⁶⁴

Ali's resoluteness and courage are therefore an "instructive lesson" (dars-i amuzandah'i) for the people of Iran. Many a people opposed his just policy and resisted him, and "it is here that the Commander of the Faithful displayed his courage." He earnestly fought against all his foes, be they the khawarij or others, and he displayed the "decisiveness (qat'iyat) of Islam" throughout his struggles.⁶⁵ And this very same decisiveness against enemies was reenacted by the Islamic Revolution. As in the days of 'Ali, today too, Khameneh'i asserted in May 1981, "the position of the Islamic Republic is not tolerated by some in the world and some don't understand it." Some within Iran "cannot endure" the "Islamic justice and decisiveness" of the revolution, and

some cannot understand it. If the people of Iran were to display "softness" and "flexibility" toward the two trends, it "means [the] death of the Islamic government, [it] means to make blind (kur shudan) the line of Islam." 'Ali remained in history and his "line" is ever-present "under the shadow of decisiveness." If 'Ali's line would sink into oblivion in the face of such formidable enemies, "Surely, the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Republic and Islam will not survive." The continuation of this revolution, Khameneh'i concluded, is contingent upon this decisiveness.⁶⁶

The revolutionary version of the person and the career of Hasan, the Second Imam (d. 670), 'Ali's son and Husayn's older brother, is far more striking. Hasan is usually described in contemporary Western sources as a man "who was more at home in the harem than on the throne," whose interests "lay in fields other than those of imperial administration."⁶⁷ Accordingly, he is considered a man of compromise who waived his right to the caliphate because of power considerations:

Hasan had inherited his father's mantle, after his father, 'Ali...was assassinated in A.D. 661. But in the grim struggle for power which erupted in the new Muslim polity and claimed Imam 'Ali as its victim, Hasan had abdicated in favor of his father's rival...Mu'awiyah, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. Two provinces

of the state, Syria and Iraq, battled for ascendancy. The men of Iraq had proclaimed their allegiance to 'Ali and, after him, to his son [Hasan]. But the Iraqis, and their Imam Hasan, were no match for the tribes and soldiers of Syria. Hasan had understood the harsh balance of force. The might of the Syrians was irresistible....Hasan abdicated; he was no martyr; he was bought off by the ruler of Damascus [Mu'awiyah].... After his abdication, Hasan retired to the city of Medina, led a quiet life, and died several years later.⁶⁸

In Friday sermons, however, Imam Hasan had turned into a dauntless warrior who was committed to struggle against the government of the day in order to win back his usurped and rightful rule. Thus, it is argued, when Mu'awiyah broke his agreement with Hasan (whereby he would refrain from appointing a successor to the Caliphate after him, leaving the choice to the Muslim community), and named his own son, Yazid, a Caliph, "Imam Hasan began to raise an uproar" and "caused his protest to overflow."⁶⁹ Indeed, at first Hasan "went to war [against Mu'awiyah] and he also launched a military expedition," but he failed.⁷⁰ His failure, however, was due, not to his weak personality or lack of principles, but to the "disposition" of the Muslim community. Imam Hasan, Rafsanjani explained (December 1981) had realized, "that the people are in no position to endure war, so he didn't wage war" against Mu'awiyah.⁷¹ Moreover, his army betrayed him, deserting

to the camp of Mu'awiyah. As Rafsanjani argued in July 1982:

Hasan...wanted to launch a [decisive] war against Mu'awiyah...but failed. Mu'awiyah sent him a package, saying: 'Look. These are the letters of your troops. The chiefs of your army had written to me that [they will] hand you over to me handcuffed'. These were the powers at the disposal of Imam Hasan.⁷²

Nevertheless, Hasan continued his struggle against the rule of the Umayyads, despite his inferior position of power. He remained opposed to Mu'awiyah's oppression and "throughout his lifetime [he] had always reproached Mu'awiyah."⁷³ According to prayer leaders, Hasan's determined opposition to the Umayyad Caliph was displayed several times. One such instance occurred when Mu'awiyah was challenged by a Khawarij revolt. At that time Hasan was refused permission to leave Medina for Kufa. The Caliph approached Hasan and told him that he would be allowed to proceed to Kufa should he help him suppress the revolt. Hasan's response ran as follows:

Mu'awiyah! You are making a big mistake thinking that I will go as your agent and fight a group which opposes you. If you see that [I choose] not to fight [against you], it is...because the conditions don't allow me [to do so]. Should I assess that war must be launched...against a person praying to the direction [of Mecca -- i.e., against an apparent Muslim]...the first person [I will fight against] is you. That is, the day when I will launch an armed struggle...it would be

absurd if I were to direct it against another man. The first [man] in the confines of the Muslim world against whom I will launch a war is you yourself [who dares] to be termed the Commander of the Faithful.⁷⁴

Accordingly, those who claim that Hasan "struck a compromise" and "made peace" with Mu'awiyah were condemned by prayer leaders as "ignorant people."⁷⁵ Doubtlessly, if he had made any compromise with the Umayyad Caliph, the latter "would not have had [any] pretext to make Imam Hasan a shahid [martyr]. If Imam Hasan was not a troublesome constituent ('ansar-i muzahami) to Mu'awiyah, why did he become shahid?"⁷⁶ In short, those who ask, "Why didn't Hasan fight; why did he make peace" with Mu'awiyah? are the people whom 'Ali said about them "My God! Take me away from them or take them away from me -- they are the worse [people]."⁷⁷

Imam Hasan's steadfastness and revolutionary identity thus proved, his exemplary behavior too, became worthy of reenacting. Accordingly, the author and leader of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini, became the reincarnation of the Second Imam in twentieth century Iran. In this respect, Rafsanjani stated (December 1981) that there exist "common circumstances" between the time of Imam Hasan and "our situation," particularly with

regard to "our leader in the period of struggle" against the Shah. For instance, the government in the days of Hasan was "subject to the spite and disgust of the people" on account of the crimes it had committed, and moreover, the Caliph Mu'awiyah made unsuccessful "effort to make [Hasan] submissive" and "to exploit [the Imam's] honor and reputation for [his] own interests." Rafsanjani went on to say, equating Imam Hasan with Imam Khomeini:

This was something which totally [corresponds] with the period of struggle against the [ancien] regime; our leader was under the same circumstances, and also today we have the same thing with regard to the superpowers.⁷⁸

Ayatollah Khomeini was always acclaimed for his lack of compromise on any issue he had confronted. Accordingly, he was cited as publicly remarking "I am not like Hasan, I am like Husayn,"⁷⁹ meaning that (like the latter but unlike the former) he never believed in nor practiced political compromise. Nonetheless, the transformation of Hasan's myth as examined above practically deprives Khomeini's slogan of any substance. Indeed, now it seems as though Khomeini should have said of himself, "I am like Hasan, and I am like Husayn." Otherwise, the probability of equating Khomeini with the Second Imam in communal sermons would have been unheard of.

The Fourth Imam, 'Ali ibn Husayn, called Zayn al-Abidin (d. 713), the only surviving son of Imam Husayn, was seldom referred to in the sermons at hand (only two, partial sermons were dedicated to his lifetime career -- both by Khameneh'i). This is most surprising, since in Shi'i tradition, "The emphasis on sorrowful remembrance of the great tragedy of Karbala owes its beginning to him, for he himself lived this tragedy to its bitter end."⁸⁰ Accordingly, he

was considered the greatest of weepers, for he mourned his father for forty years. Whenever food was brought before him, he would remember his father's suffering and weep until his food became wet with his tears.... Zayn al-Abidin provided the powerful example for all weepers here on earth....⁸¹

It was therefore expected that an earnest, quantitative effort would be made in sermons to radically transform the image of Zayn al-Abidin from a tragic "weeper" to a victorious hero, thus eliminating the element of pathos so common to the Imam.

Nevertheless, also the Fourth Imam was praised for his "continuous jihad and struggle," and for his reluctance "to sit idly by and refrain from setting [himself] in motion;"⁸² "he had struggled in order to harass (sutuh) the enemy."⁸³ Yet, he was most acclaimed for his fearless sermon at the court of Yazid, after he was

brought as a prisoner to Damascus, along with the other survivors of the tragedy of Karbala. According to Khameneh'i (December 1980), Yazid gave Zayn al-Abidin permission to speak to the people because he wrongly assumed that he would not cause him any harm on account of his "low spirit" and "feebleness." The Imam, however,

mounted the pulpit and, in the center of [Yazid's] government, made public the philosophy of the Imamate and the events [leading to the] martyrdom[s] [of Karaba] at the hands of the taghuti movement -- the government of the Umayyads. He had caused the people of Damascus to revolt. That is, the Imam...was not afraid of the functionaries in the Umayyad court; he spoke the words of truth (haqq).⁸⁴

Khameneh'i also pointed to the devastating conditions of the Shi'ah following the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, something which was left for Zayn al-Abidin to correct, needless to say, with great valor and success. He refers to a hadith (attributed to the Sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq) which reads: irtadda al-nas ba'ada al-Husayn. That is, Khameneh'i explained, "After the martyrdom of Imam Husayn all the people apostatized (bargashtand), all had deviated from the way...of the Imamat, which was a way of overwhelming danger on account of pressure [and] tensions." Nevertheless, due to the Fourth Imam's activities immediately upon his release from Yazid's

prison, "the people gradually rallied around [him], and the movement of the Imamat...and of the Shi'ah was set into motion, or else everything would have ended with 'Ashura."⁸⁵ During that period the Imam repeatedly prohibited the 'ulama' "to join the service of tyrants and Shaytans (Satans)." Those who did so, the Imam reportedly confirmed, "deviate from the way of God."⁸⁶

Finally, given the Fourth Imam's fearless struggle against the government of the day, the people of Iran should emulate his way and revive his line. The hardships of the Iranian nation, Khameneh'i claimed, are and have been fewer than those suffered by Zayn al-Abidin. "Today," he concluded, "our nation too, should learn from the Imam [how] to stand up against the wave of plots, against the formidable storms of kufr, despotism and tyranny." Like the Imam, the nation should "not grow weary" -- it should "weary out the enemy."⁸⁷

Another Shi'i Imam worthy of an elaborate discussion is the Sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765). It has already been noted (see above) that Sadiq had been greatly responsible for the moderation of the Shi'i sect, thus transforming the early political Shi'ism into a quietist religious movement focusing on theology rather than on

politics.⁸⁸ Indeed, even Jassim M. Hussain, a scholar who seems to be sympathetic with the Islamic Revolution and its underlying mythology, felt compelled to note that,

...al-Sadiq maintained [a]...quiescent policy toward the 'Abbasids....[He] held that it was not necessary for the...Imam to rise up in revolt immediately in order to recover his rights to political authority. He should be satisfied with the spiritual leadership and perform its duties until the time when the community is sufficiently aware of his right to political power. Then God will assist him in his quest. In accordance with his quiescent policy, al-Sadiq announced openly that...al-Mahdi and not himself achieve political power.⁸⁹

This, however, did not prevent Hojjat al-Islam Ruhani from claiming (October 1989), that the Sixth Imam pursued the same goals of the prophets, namely, "Revolt for the sake of equity." The Imam also raised numerous scholars, so that "Those who had been instructed by Imam Sadiq never kept silent in the face of the government's...oppression and cruelty." In short, Ruhani claimed, "The life of Imam Sadiq was not separated from the life of the Prophet; he was dedicated to struggle -- struggle in the way of God and in the worship of God."⁹⁰ Moreover, Khameneh'i revealed (September 1980) another formerly unknown characteristic of the Sixth Imam. In addition to being a "man of struggle" (mard-i mubarazah), Khameneh'i claimed,

Ja'far al-Sadiq was also a "man of organization" (mard-i tashkilat). He established an extensive organization of the believers, extending to the remotest parts of the then known world. And that organization was indebted to "waging a powerful political struggle of the household of 'Ali."⁹¹ Thus, Khameneh'i denounced (June 1989), in a most usual manner, those claiming that the Sixth Imam shunned away from politics. On the contrary, he asserted, "All his activities, be they...cultural or otherwise, were [aimed at] the removal of the ruling government and the establishment of an Islamic government."⁹²

The myth of the Sixth Imam was therefore worthy of reenactment as well. And once again, it was up to Ayatollah Khomeini to take Ja'far al-Sadiq's place in twentieth century Iran. According to Khameneh'i, the Sixth Imam had been opposed both to the Umayyads and, after them, to the 'Abbasids; he had struggled against both dynasties. And today, "the Imam['s]...line" is also opposed to the "Umayyad lines" (khutut) -- that is, the "flanks that are attached to the previous regime and to its international supporters" -- and to the "'Abbasid line" -- that is, the "people who wish to use the fruit (mahsul) of...the people's grand Islamic struggle" for their own political ends. (The "'Abbasid line" mentioned

here is obviously an allusion to internal opposition organizations, particularly the Mujahidin-i Khalq and the Fada'iyyan-i Khalq, which, soon after the demise of the Shah, regarded terrorism and violence as the only means left to express their dissent against the repression of the Islamic regime.) Thus, Khomeini is sitting "on Imam Sadiq's throne," the latter being Khomeini's "spiritual father" and "genealogical father"; in short, the "lines" of both are, in fact, one.⁹³

Moreover, in a sermon delivered in August 1981, Rafsanjani implied that the myth of the Sixth Imam had already been reenacted in Iran, specifically by the Center for Religious Learning in Qom, Fayziyah, much before the Islamic Revolution. He specifically referred to the Shah's armed assault on the theological center that took place on March 22, 1963, which, together with the famous 15th of Khurdad (June 5) 1963 uprising, is regarded by the Islamic regime, "as the beginning of the revolutionary movement which brought about the Islamic Revolution, and Khomeini's return to Iran from exile."⁹⁴ Rafsanjani then recalled that the day chosen for the attack was the anniversary of the martyrdom of the Sixth Imam, and that it should not be considered a coincidence. This is so, he claimed, because "there is an important parallel between the theological

center and the Imam." One of the great achievements of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, he explained, was to raise many scholars versed in theology and the learnings of Islam. These scholars, in turn, left their mark on succeeding generations, so that the Imam's achievement "superseded" the oppression of the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids. In short, the Sixth Imam "had given ample powers to the Shi'ah, which are still being nourishing by them to this very day."

But this, according to Rafsanjani, was something that was accomplished by Fayziyah as well. In the days of the Shah's oppressive reign "the theological center of Qom had done work similar to the work of Imam Sadiq." It produced "thousands of fervent [and] pious scholars who were acquainted with the issues of the day and with instruction." And, like Ja'far al-Sadiq's students before them, these scholars superseded the Shah's oppression, for they were the "provisions (zakhirah) of the revolution." Doubtlessly, without them "it would have been impossible to defeat the regime of the Shah." They reached the remotest regions carrying with them the "insight" (ma'rafat) of the revolution, and, upon their return to the theological center, they brought back the people's sentiments, needs and conceptions, thus enabling the

clerical opposition to understand their society better.⁹⁵

The remaining Imams -- the Fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 732) and the Seventh to the Tenth Imams (I have not found a single sermon dealing with the Eleventh Imam, Hasan al-'Askari), Musa al-Kazim (d. 799), 'Ali al-Riza (d. 818), Muhammad al-Javad (d. 835), and 'Ali al-Hadi (d. 868) respectively -- have all occupied a marginal position in Friday sermons. To be sure, all were portrayed as staunch "political" leaders who carried "the heaviest burden of jihad on their shoulder" throughout their lifetime. Accordingly, they all assumed the leadership of the community and waged "political struggles" in the most "sensitive" and "unstable" periods of the Shi'ah, thus rescuing the sect from certain extinction. Likewise, all vehemently opposed any dealings with the political, Umayyad and 'Abbasid, authorities, and were determined to divulge the rulers' "true un-Islamic face" for the benefit of the Muslim community. Moreover, all "irresponsible" and "false" claims that the Imams shunned away from politics and political struggle were refuted by arguments of the following type: "If they had only prayed and fasted, why, then, were they thrown to jail and become martyrs?; they were not thrown to jail for no reason." And finally, the

struggles of the Imams and their Islamic revolutionary identity became a paradigm and a model for all Iranians to emulate.⁹⁶

In this respect, the Fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir, was presented as the one exceptional leader of the Shi'ah who avoided an "armed struggle" due to "the exigencies of time." To be sure, he "waged a visionary and ideological struggle...which, in his view, was more important than all political struggles."⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the Fifth Imam was the only Imam in his line who is admitted of abstaining from any physical, overt action to win back his usurped and rightful government.

The new, politicized vision of Shi'i Islam had turned the Shi'i Imams from quiescent heroes who provide a model of staunch faith and unquestionable obedience to the divine decree, into militant and political heroes to be emulated for their resolute opposition to tyranny and their commitment to a just Islamic government. During the revolutionary period of 1978-79, this reinterpreted version of the Imams' myth helped the 'ulama' to instill in the masses the much needed spirit of struggle against the Shah's tyranny. Once in power, the 'ulama' continued to harness the reinterpreted, revolutionized myth of the

Imams to their cause, this time, however, in order to legitimize their successful bid for political power. The new paradigmatic revolutionary behavior of the Imams also served to keep up revolutionary zeal alive and to explain what is needed of the people during the regime's confrontations with its perceived foes.

Nevertheless, there is no myth, other than that of the martyred Imam Husayn, that can demonstrate so profoundly and naturally the transformation of Shi'ism from a defeated, "acted upon" sect, into a conquering and victorious community of believers. Likewise, no myth, but that of Husayn's, was able to keep the revolutionary fervor of the masses at such high pitch, to clarify where where their revolutionary obligations lay, and to mobilize the them behind the Islamic regime.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. Ittila'at, March 5, 1985.
2. Nikki Keddie, for instance, has argued that in many respects Khomeini's views have no traces in previous Shi'i thought; see her "Iran: Change in Islam; Islam in Change," International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 11 (1980), p. 532.
3. Bernard Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History," in Kramer (ed.), Shi'ism, Resistance and Revolution (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987) pp. 21-30 [hereafter, The Shi'a].
4. Mangol Bayat, "The Iranian Revolution of 1978-79: Fundamentalist or Modern," Middle East Journal, Vol. 37 (1983), p. 35 [hereafter, The Iranian Revolution]. Also see, Mangol Bayat, Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), pp. xi-xvii [hereafter, Mysticism and Dissent]; Etan Kohlberg, "From Imamiyya to Ithna 'Ashariyya," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (1976), pp. 521-554; and W. Montgomery Watt, "The Significance of the Early Stages of Imami Shi'ism," in N.R. Keddie (ed.) Religion and Politics in Iran, pp. 21-32.
5. Arjomand, The Shadow of God, p. 36.
6. Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), pp. 78-79 [hereafter, Islamic Messianism].
7. Bayat, Mysticism and Dissent, p. 16.
8. Cited in Husain M. Jafri, The Origins and Early Development of Shi'i Islam (London: Longman, 1978), p. 299. On Shi'i views on taqiyyah see Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imami Views on taqiyya," Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 95 (1975), pp. 395-402; and Hamid Enayat, Modern Islamic Political Thought (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), pp. 175-181.
9. Arjomand, The Shadow of God, p. 36.
10. Ibid., pp. 109-121. Also see, M. Bayat, Mysticism and Dissent, pp. 18-19; and Ann Lambton, "Quis Custodiet

Custodos? Some Reflections on the Persian Theory of Government," Studia Islamica, Vol. 5 (1955), pp. 125-148.

11. On the 'ulama' in Qajar Iran with emphasis on their oppositional role during the period see, Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the 'Ulama in the Qajar Period (Berkely & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969) [hereafter, Religion and State]; Nikkie Keddie, "The Origins of the Religious-Radical Alliance in Iran," in N. Keddie, Iran: Religion, Politics and Society (London: Frank Cass, 1980), pp. 80-116 [hereafter, The Religious-Radical Alliance]; and Nikkie Keddie, "The Roots of the 'Ulama's Power in Iran," in N. Keddie (ed.), Scholars, Saints and Sufis (Berkely, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 211-229 [hereafter, The 'Ulama's Power].

12. Mangol bayat, "Islam in Pahlavi and Post-Pahlavi Iran: A Cultural Revolution?," in John L. Esposito (ed.) Islam and Development: Religion and Sociopolitical Change (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980), p. 94 [hereafter, Islam].

13. Mangol Bayat, "The Iranian Revolution," p. 35. On the 'ulama in Pahlavi Iran see, Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980) [hereafter, Religion and Politics]; Hamid Algar, "The Oppositional Role of the Ulama in Twentieth-Century Iran," in Nikkie R. Keddie (ed.), Scholars, Saints and Sufis (Berkely & London: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 231-255 [hereafter, Oppositional Role]; and Fischer, Iran.

14. Mangol Bayat, "Islam," p. 97.

15. Mangol Bayat, "Shi'a Islam as a Functioning Ideology in Iran: The Cult of the Hidden Imam," in Barry M. Rosen (ed.), Iran Since the Revolution: Internal Dynamics, Regional Conflict and the Superpowers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 25. The essential groundwork of formulating a new, stimulating and inspiring conception of Islam was first achieved by the lay Iranian intellectual Dr. 'Ali Shari'ati (d. 1977). His views on Islam as an ideology of revolution largely correspond, albeit for different reasons and objectives, with those of the clerical regime. On Shari'ati's thought, see Shahrough Akhavi, "Shari'ati's Social Thought," in N. R. Keddie (ed.), Religion and Politics in Iran, pp. 125-144; Mangol

Bayat-Philipp, "Shi'ism in Contemporary Iranian Politics: The Case of 'Ali Shari'ati," in Elie Kedourie and Sylvia Haim (eds.), Toward a Modern Iran, pp. 155-168 [hereafter, Shari'ati]; and Abdul Aziz Sachedina, "'Ali Shari'ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," in John L. Esposito (ed.), Voices of Resurgent Islam (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 191-214. Some Shari'ati's own writings are also available to the English reader, as they were translated from the Persian, especially since the revolutionary period of 1978-79. See, for example, Shari'ati's Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique, trans. by R. Campbell (Berkley: Mizan Press, 1980); On the Sociology of Islam, trans. by H. Algar (Berkley: Mizan Press, 1979); and Hajj, trans. by A. Behzadnia, M.D. and N. Denny (Houston: Free Islamic Literatures, 1980).

16. Mangol Bayat, "Shari'ati," p. 164.
17. Mangol Bayat, "The Iranian Revolution," pp. 41-42.
18. Ittिला'at, August 6, 1988. For similar expressions, see Hlojjat al-Islam Jamarani, before sermon, Ittिला'at, March 18, 1989.
19. Ittिला'at, August 20, 1988.
20. Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 52 [hereafter, Khutbah].
21. Ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 4-5.
22. Hojjat al-Islam Amini, before sermon, Ittिला'at, February 2, 1985. For similar expressions, see Hojjat al-Islam Nateq Nuri, Kayhan, October 30 1982; Khameneh'i, Ittिला'at, August 1, 1987; and Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fazlullah, before sermon, Ittिला'at, January 30, 1988.
23. Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 176.
24. Khameneh'i, February 22, 1980, ibid., pp. 42-43.
25. November 28, 1980, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 1-3.
26. Rafsanjani, september 11, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 397-400.
27. See, for instance, Khameneh'i, Ittिला'at, November 12, 1988; and Hojjat al-Islam Imami-Kashani, Ittिला'at, September 9, 1989. The issue of free will is also related

to the subject of intizar ("expectation" of the return of the Hidden Imam), which will be discussed in chapter seven.

28. February 12, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 236. Also see Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, November 12, 1988.

29. Ittila'at, May 21, 1988. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, February 8, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 29-30.

30. Khameneh'i, July 11, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 222-223. Also see, Khameneh'i, May 16, 1980, ibid., p. 149.

31. Khameneh'i, May 2, 1980, ibid., pp. 135-136. The Islamic regime's view of man as possessing free will was undoubtedly influenced by Shari'ati's conception of the people (al-nas) as the main cause of fundamental change and development in human history. A brief examination of Shari'ati's views on this issue will be offered in chapter seven.

32. Kayhan, June 26, 1982.

33. October 12, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 92-93. For similar definitions of sabr, see Rafsanjani, Kayhan, June 26, 1982; and Hujjat ol-Islam Muvahidi-Savaji, before sermon, Ittila'at, October 22, 1983.

34. Khameneh'i, April 4, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 95-96.

35. Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 2-3. For similar expressions, see Ayatollah Husayn 'Ali Montazeri, October 19, 1979, ibid., p. 102.

36. Khameneh'i, July 11, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 218.

37. Hojjat al-Islam Amini, before sermon, Ittila'at, February 2, 1985. For similar expressions, see Ayatollah Musavi Ardebili, Kayhan, December 11, 1982.

38. Khameneh'i, July 18, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 231.

39. Khameneh'i, April 11, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 108.

40. Etan Kohlberg, "Imam and Community in the Pre-Ghayba Period," in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.), Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 25.

41. Sachedina, Islamic Messianism, p. 24.
42. W. M. Montgomery Watt, "The Reappraisal of 'Abbasid Shi'ism," in F. Makdisi (ed.), Arab and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb (Leiden: Brill, 1965), p. 369.
43. Gustav Thaïss, "Religious Symbolism and Social Change: The Drama of Husain," in N. Keddie (ed.), Scholars, Saints and Sufis, p. 358 [hereafter, Thaïss]. [Emphasis in the original.]
44. Mahmoud Ayoub, Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Ashura in Twelver Shi'ism (The Hague, Paris & New York: Mouton, 1978), p. 25 [hereafter, Ayoub].
45. Eliade, Myth and Reality, pp. 5-6. [Emphasis in the original.]
46. Eliade, Myths Dreams and Mysteries, p. 23.
47. 'Ali Shari'ati was the first in the 1960's to argue that the Imams proclaimed their mission in the form of a rebellion against the existing order. He argued that they were political leaders committed to a social revolution and that their existence provides a model for men to follow. See, Bayat, "Shari'ati," pp. 155-168. Ayatollah Khomeini followed suit in the 1970's, arguing in his famous tract on the nature and function of Islamic government, Vilayat-i Faqih (1971), that the Imams "were all soldiers, commanders, and warriors. They put on military dress and went into battle...." See Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini, trans. and annotated by Hamid Algar (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 35 [hereafter, Islam and Revolution].
48. Speech before sermon, Ittila'at, May 5, 1984.
49. Kayhan, July 10, 1982. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, May 22, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, pp. 218-220.
50. August 22, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 275-276. For similar expressions, see Hoojjat al-Islam Hasan Ruhani, before sermon, Ittila'at, October 21, 1989. The Islamic Revolution was first and foremost depicted as the reenactment, or a resumption, of the revolutionary deeds of Prophet Muhammad. This theme will be discussed in

detail in chapter five (dealing with the legitimization of the Islamic government), since the equation of Iran's Islamic Revolution with the Prophet's "Islamic Revolution" in seventh century Arabia, attained great significance in the Islamic regime's campaign to legitimize itself in the eyes of the Iranian people.

51. Ibid.

52. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, August 1, 1987.

53. Khameneh'i, May 8, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, pp. 205-206.

54. Ittila'at, April 28, 1984. Rafsanjani here is apparently referring to the Hujjatiyah, a grouping of strictly orthodox clerics. It is thought to have formed originally in the 1950's as an anti-Bahai organization. Since the toppling of the Shah they have opposed the Maktabi movement -- which was made up mostly of former students of Khomeini who gradually came to dictate the course of events in Iran. The Hujjatiyah had opposed the Maktabi on issues relating to Iran's social and economic issues, the Iran-Iran War, the process of Islamization, but most importantly, on doctrinal grounds. The Hujjatiyah rejected the direct involvement of the clergy in politics and in government, claiming that leadership during the occultation belongs exclusively to the Hidden Imam, and not to Khomeini or the 'ulama'. Also, they allegedly believed that revolutionary action prior to the return of the Imam was a heresy (which is probably why Rafsanjani renounced the movement in the cited passage). On the Hujjatiyah, see Menashri, Iran, pp. 220-225, 268-271.

55. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, August 1, 1987.

56. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, March 6, 1985. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, May 30, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 165-166; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 29, 1989.

57. Rafsanjani, May 7, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 401.

58. Khameneh'i, June 6, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 176. Also see, Khameneh'i, August 29, 1980, ibid., pp. 287-288.

59. Kayhan, July 17, 1982.

60. June 10, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, 1981.

61. Menashri, Iran, p. 145.
62. Khameneh'i, April 4, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 95-96.
63. Khameneh'i, August 29, 1980, ibid., pp. 286-288. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, May 30, 1980, ibid., pp. 165-166.
64. Ittila'at, March 5, 1988.
65. Khameneh'i, May 15, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 210.
66. Ibib., pp. 210-211.
67. Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, p. 190.
68. Fuad Ajami, The Vanished Imam: Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a of Lebanon (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 139 [hereafter, Ajami].
69. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, June 23, 1984. Also see, Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, October 13, 1984.
70. Rafsanjani, December 25, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 164.
71. Ibid..
72. Rafsanjani, Kayhan, July 10, 1982.
73. Rafsanjani, December 25, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 164.
74. Ibid., p. 164. Also see, Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, June 23, 1984.
75. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, June 23, 1984. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, Kayhan, October 13, 1984.
76. Rafsanjani, December 25, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 165.
77. Rafsanjani, Kayhan, July 10, 1982.
78. December 25, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 163-164.
79. Peter Chelkowski, "In Ritual and Revolution: The Image in the Transformation of Iranian Culture," Views: The Journal of Photography of New England, Vol. 10 (Spring,

- 1989), p. 11 [hereafter, In Ritual and Revolution].
80. Ayoub, p. 143.
81. Ibid., pp. 143-144.
82. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, August 28, 1988.
83. Khameneh'i, December 5, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 11.
84. Ibid., p. 12. Zayn al-Abidin's sermon in the court of Yazid will also be discussed in chapter four.
85. Ibid., p. 13.
86. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
87. Ibid., p. 14.
88. See Marshal G. S. Hodgson, "How did Early Shi'a become Sectarian," Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 75 (1955), p. 9.
89. Jassim M. Hussain, The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam: A Historical Background (London: The Muhammadai Trust, 1982), pp. 32-33.
90. Speech before sermon, Ittila'at, October 21, 1981. For similar remarks on Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, see Rafsanjani, Kayhan, July 28, 1984.
91. September 5, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 290.
92. Ittila'at, June 3, 1989.
93. September 5, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 290-291.
94. Peter Chelkowski, "Khomeini's Iran," p. 96.
95. August 28, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, pp. 379-380.
96. On Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, see Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, August 23, 1985; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, August 1, 1987. On Imam Musa al-Kazim, see Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, April 20, 1985; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, April 5, 1986. On Imam 'Ali al-Riza, see Rafsanjani, December 25, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 165-166. On Imam Muhammad al-Javad, see Khameneh'i, May 15, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 214; and Rafsanjani, Kayhan, July 23, 1983. On Imam Muhammad al-

Hadi, see Khameneh'i, May 8, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, pp. 205-206.

97. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, September 7, 1987.

Chapter IV:
MARTYRDOM AND REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL:
THE KARBALA PARADIGM REACTIVATED

A. Introduction

On March 15, 1985, in the midst of Khameneh'i's sermon, a loud explosion was heard on the prayer grounds of Tehran University, reportedly the result of a bomb which was planted previously by the opposition. Consequently, the crowd attending the sermon spontaneously chanted the following words in response:

We have been ready -- we came for the sake of martyrdom (Ma amadah'im -- baray-'i shahadat amadim).

Husayn, Husayn, is our slogan -- martyrdom is our glory (Husayn, Husayn, shi'ar-i ma ast -- shahadat iftikhar-i ma ast).¹

Without doubt, these words illustrate the transformed exemplary lessons propagated by the revolutionary version of the Shi'ah origin myth -- the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in Karbala following his abortive revolt against the

Umayyad Caliph Yazid in 680 (commonly known as the "Karbala paradigm"). Husayn had been regarded by successive generations as the symbol of tragedy, to be lamented in sorrow and emulated as the leading tormented hero of Shi'ism. Conversely, with the emergence of Islam as an ideology of revolution (see chapter three), Husayn became the chief symbol of struggle and resistance against tyranny, to be emulated for his willingness to battle against all odds and offer his life as a martyr for the just cause.

Indeed, the Third Imam has always occupied a special position among his fellow Imams. He is the Sayyid al-Shuhada' (the "lord of [all] martyrs") who had performed the greatest sacrifice in God's way. In addition, more than any other Imam, his death at the hands of the Umayyads came to symbolize the historical injustice which was committed against the household of 'Ali: "This injustice should be lamented, its perpetrators hated, and [the believers should] aspire the correction of the historical distortion in the future."² Thus, the martyrdom of Husayn is the origin myth of Shi'i Islam par excellence: better than any other part of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth it tells how the reality of the Shi'i sect came into existence, and it offers the means (the

paradigm) of coping with that reality. As Fischer observes, it "pulls together in a universal way anxieties and sufferings on several dimensions and attempts to present acceptable solutions."³

This chapter discusses the reinterpreted, transformed myth of the Karbala paradigm. Section B views in a historical context the transformation of the myth -- from one advocating submission and quietism into one which calls for revolutionary action. It terminates with the toppling of the Pahlavi monarchy. Section C then examines how the Islamic regime has employed the reinterpreted myth for its own political ends of mass mobilization and regime support during various phases of the revolution.

This is the place to note, once again, that the present discussion is an inseparable part of chapter three which deals with the transformed, revolutionized careers of the other Shi'i Imams. Nevertheless, the importance of the Karbala paradigm as the origin myth of Shi'ism, and, particularly, its emergence as the main stimulant for revolutionary action during and after the struggle against the Shah, require a separate examination of the subject.

B. The Karbala Paradigm in a Historical Context

I have already noted in several passages of this study that myths assume their significance in society due to their relevant, present-oriented, creative and exemplary functions: they provide the basis for the "structure of reality" and "they are the exemplary models of human behavior."⁴ However, it seems that the significance of the Karbala paradigm in the Shi'ah stemmed for many years, not so much from the myth's exemplary function, as from its creative, ontological one. Doubtlessly, there is no other myth that can explain so emotionally and codensely the origins of the historical injustice that became the legacy of the Shi'ah for centuries. According to early Shi'i historiography, Imam Husayn embarked upon his struggle because of his uncompromising idealism; because he believed that the Islamic ideal which was achieved by his father and his grandfather was trampled under the rule of Mu'awiyah and, even more so, under the rule of Yazid.⁵ However, Husayn was defeated. His martyrdom had neither restored the Islamic ideal nor reinstated the government into the hands of Islam's legitimate rulers -- the descendants of the Prophet. And this defeat had always reminded the faithful of their own unfortunate fate as a

failed, persecuted and oppressed sect, whose emblem is repeated failure. In such manner, the martyrdom of Imam Husayn was perhaps the only myth capable of enfolding and knitting so naturally, the aspiration for justice and the sense of failure of the Shi'i sect. "Men and women grieved for the fallen Imam. They saw in...his martyrdom their own dispossession"⁶; "those who weep in memory of his martyrdom are lamenting too, the recurrent temporal defeat of his aspiration."⁷

Given this profound identification with Husayn and the equation of his own fate with the fate of his followers, the Third Imam became the archetype of a tormented, tragic figure, who performed the greatest sacrifice for his religion. The portrayal in Shi'i sources of his brutal death at the hands of the Umayyad army attests to that:

Almost all sources, early and late ones... [indicate] that there were found on the body of Husayn thirty-three stabs of the spear and thirty-four strikes with the sword, and his body was riddled with arrows like a porcupineIt seems that Husayn was killed gradually, so to speak, first by randomly shot arrows, then by wounds inflicted on him by stones and strikes of the swords from those passing by.... We are told that he... [was] left naked on the sand....At last...[o]ne man ran and dealt him a blow with his sword which severed his left shoulder. Another man stabbed him in the back and he fell on his face. It is not clear who finally cut off Husayn's head.⁸

As shown in chapter three, the acceptance of suffering in humility, as the mythological heroes of the Shi'ah had done, was perceived as a guarantee for suitable reward in the hereafter -- a guarantee for the desired redemption which was denied the believers in this world. This was, in effect, the exemplary lesson conveyed in all the parts of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth. The Karbala paradigm was no exception. It is true, Imam Husayn followed an activist and rebellious line. But he failed and met a horrendous martyrdom, thus illustrating the uselessness of immediate action and, consequently, the need to adopt a passive-accommodative attitude toward the bitter reality, that postpones the achievement of redemption to the hereafter. The believers were called upon to draw their inspiration, not from Husayn's behavior, ideals and values, but from the tortured Imam who will "guide them on their own journey along the Via Dolorosa, the road of suffering and humiliation leading to the eternal bliss of paradise."⁹ Nonetheless, as an exemplary myth, Imam Husayn fulfilled a far more important other-worldly redemptive function than the remaining Imams. A few words about the notion of martyrdom (shahadat) in Shi'ism may clarify this point.

"The notion of martyrdom," Lewis writes, "is common to Christendom and Islam. Indeed, the same word is used --

martyr is from a Greek word meaning witness, and the Arabic shahid has exactly the same meaning."¹⁰ A shahid, therefore, is he who bears witness to his faith by dying in God's way, he who gives himself over to be killed in witness of the Truth or to uphold the Truth.¹¹ Thus Shahadat (just like sufferings, but even more so) is the most exalted testament of one's faith. Accordingly, the shahid attains the most sublime station in paradise -- a station which is the nearest to God's throne and is called Dar al-Shuhada, the "Abode of the Martyrs."¹² Here the shahid enjoys the bliss of paradise and is compensated for all the injustices and sufferings he had experienced in his temporal life. This is, in essence, redemption -- the direct opposite of the earthly "House of Sorrows"; it is the sublime mirth which is secured for all people who have become shahids for their faith.

The prevalent tradition in Shi'i Islam is that all the Imams (with the exception of the twelfth, who is to return from occultation as the expected Messiah) had undergone martyrdom. They therefore reside close to God who provides them with his grace and takes care of all their needs. Moreover, since the Imams' worldly sufferings and martyrdom exhibited their exceptional degree of faith, God has granted them a distinctive privilege: as is the case

of Christ in Christianity, so do the Imams of the Shi'ah operate as intercessors (shufa'a'), urging God to grant the believers -- those whose temporal afflictions give testimony to their faith -- the reward of eternal bliss in paradise. Imam Husayn, however, occupies a more eminent position in paradise than his fellow Imams. He is the "Lord of the Martyrs" whose great sacrifice had proven his staunch and unequalled devotion to God. The importance of Imam Husayn as the promoter of other-worldly redemption, as an intercessor between God and the believers, was therefore viewed by the Shi'ah as supreme.

But even Imam Husayn's role as intermediary cannot help the believers attain eternal bliss in paradise, should they not prove worthy of it. In this respect, their mundane afflictions are not sufficient evidence that they are worthy of Imam Husayn's intercessory efforts. For a myth is exemplary and consequently repeatable, because, to use Eliade's words once again, "it serves as a model, and by the same token as a justification, for all human actions."¹³ Thus Imam Husayn's followers should constantly reenact his anguish in actuality, but mainly symbolically (through self-flagellations and passion plays -- ta'ziyah -- in the month of Muharram¹⁴). Moreover, they should constantly bring back his memory, and lament

his sorrow and grief. In short, only through the reenactment of the Third Imam's myth will his followers prove worthy of his intercession and thus secure a place in paradise. As the Eighth Imam 'Ali al-Riza reportedly declared:

He who takes the day of 'Ashura' as the day of his afflictions and grief and weeping, God would make the Day of Resurrection a day of his joy and exaltation, and we shall be a comfort and security for him in paradise.¹⁵

The exemplary other-worldly orientation of the Karbala Paradigm was further enhanced by virtue of the Third Imam's prior knowledge of the fate awaiting him, and his own understanding that personal redemption will be gained only in the hereafter. Indeed, the Imam himself reportedly said before he left to meet his death in Karbala:

God's pleasure is our pleasure, we people of the House (ahl al-bayt), we bear His afflictions patiently and He repays us with the rewards of those who are patient. Verily [the family] of the Apostle of God shall never be separated from him. Rather it shall be gathered together for him in the precincts of sanctity (hadirat al-quds). There, in the Gardens of Paradise (jinnat) shall his eyes be consoled in them, and God shall fulfill His promises to them.¹⁶

Imam Husayn's temporal failure had thus turned into a source of redemption for his followers. It is true, his worldly defeat was also seen as the worldly defeat of his

followers. Nevertheless, Imam Husayn's otherworldly victory -- sublime and immediate bliss in paradise -- was also capable of gaining for his followers a victory in the hereafter. This, provided they share his anguish and lament the cruel end of his mundane life. The political implications of turning to the Third Imam as an intercessor, as the believers' pleader and advocate at the side of God, was well assessed by Hegland. According to this view, she writes,

the behavior of Imam Husayn and his accomplishments, ideals, and values are far less important than his connection with God and the resulting power at his disposal....In the eyes of the believer, the main aim is to get on good terms with the [Imam]...so as to increase the chances of receiving assistance from [him]In this scheme of things, the individual believer is relegated to a position of dependency. He is incapable of attaining his goals through his own efforts....The preferable political action is to try to connect yourself with the powerful so they will protect and assist you. Accept and tolerate the status quo....Do not fight or struggle; just stay out of trouble and do your best to stay afloat or get ahead. Use the powerful -- do not resist them. It is useless to resist because you will only meet defeat and, in any case, you are dependent upon the powerful and the hope of their assistance.¹⁷

The Karbala paradigm and the exemplary models it conveyed thus inspired the political passivity, acquiescence and submissiveness of the Shi'ah, directing their hopes toward otherworldly salvation. Arjomand, for

instance, claims that during the Safavid period, Shi'ism "drew on its tradition to provide compensation for the disprivileged groups, the bulk of the nation under spiritual custody, in the forms of a theodicy of suffering centered on the tragedy of Husayn's martyrdom...and, more importantly, of an otherworldly soteriology."¹⁸

Likewise, Arjomand finds that during the Qajar period, the spread of ta'ziah enhanced the political domination of the monarchy (tyranny), as poems in praise of the Shah were regularly chanted during the ceremonies.¹⁹

In 1968, a religious scholar from the holy city of Qom, Salihi Najaf-Abadi, published a book entitled Shahid-i Javid ("The Immortal Martyr"). The work triggered a heated debate among religious circles at once, and rightly so, as it was the first serious, daring, and semi-scholarly attempt to transform the quiescent character of the Karbala paradigm into an active, worldly-oriented drama. The fact that the introduction to the book was written by Ayatollah Montazeri (who, during the bulk of the 1980's, was designated as Khomeini's successor) attests to its militant tone and content. A detailed discussion of this more than five-hundred pages volume is beyond the purport of this study. It is, therefore, suffices to note that the "principal aim of the 'Immortal

Martyr' is the politicization of an aspect of the Shi'i Imamology which until recent times was generally interpreted in mystical, lyrical and emotional terms."²⁰ In other words, the author viewed Imam Husayn plainly as "a hero who combined readiness for self-sacrifice with foresight and political wisdom."²¹ He, thus, sought to refute such traditional Shi'i views that, owing to Husayn's possession of 'ilm-i Imam (knowledge exclusive to the Imams), his actions can be neither understood nor emulated by ordinary human-beings. In short, under Najaf-Abadi's scrutiny, Imam Husayn's defeat and intercessory role were far less important than his heroism which, although unique, was, nevertheless, not above the capacity of man.²²

The appearance of the "Immortal Martyr" in 1968 might seem as an insignificant event, its great influence on militant Shi'i circles notwithstanding. Yet, it is worthy of mention, not because it constituted a major intellectual breakthrough, as it was indicative of the profound change which occurred in the interpretation of the Karbala paradigm during the 1960's. Indeed, it was in consequence of this change that a study of the messages transmitted in the ceremonies commemorating the shahadat of Imam Husayn, led Thaiss to observe in 1972: "While at a

high level of generalization it might be correct to say...that the twelver Shi'ah have been content with being observers of the political scene rather than originators of political movements, it is no longer fair to make this assumption."²³ Indeed, already in the beginning of the 1960's a change was distinguishable in the contents and features of the passion plays performed in the 'Ashura', in the orations delivered during the processions accompanying them, and, most importantly, in the image of Imam Husayn: "From a memorial day praising the shahadat of Husayn, whose sacrifice redeems his grieving believers, 'Ashura' revolved into a day of rage (not of grief) in which are presented Husayn's courage and his willingness to sacrifice [his life] as a model of emulation"²⁴; "Instead of a pleader and an object of compassion, Husayn became the symbol of struggle against injustice and oppression whose conduct should be emulated."²⁵

Hence, the passive-accommodative attitude projected by the Karbala paradigm made way for an activist-revolutionary attitude that rejects the notion of reality as a divine decree. Unlike the past, when the believers were called upon to draw their inspiration from the abused and wronged Imam and to put their trust in him for otherworldly gains, they were now urged to follow in his

footsteps and to be willing, like the Imam, to offer their lives in the struggle against injustice and tyranny. Husayn ceased being a tragic figure and became a hero and a resolute warrior of uncompromising values and ideals. And, as an exemplary myth which lays the foundation for the behavior of men, Husayn's followers abandoned their passiveness and went out to take an active role in changing their destiny. It should, again, be stated, that the transformation of the Karbala paradigm was inseparable from the transformation of the other mythological heroes of Shi'ism as discussed in chapter three: it came hand in hand with the 'ulama's changing perceptions and values, it was intended to advance the struggle against the monarchy and, finally, it was employed by the Islamic regime as a means of mass mobilization and regime support. Nevertheless, the myth of Husayn was "the central theme of the revolution. Khomeini has succeeded largely because he has been able to convert popular beliefs and Karbala rituals into mass mobilization."²⁶

Fischer's following words may be useful in assessing the changes in the image of the Third Imam and, particularly, in the exemplary model it conveyed. The Karbala paradigm, he writes, is that part of the Shi'i cosmogonic myth

that is the most emotionally, intense and concentrated, and is the reference point for almost all popular preaching....Its focus is the emotionally potent theme of corrupt and oppressive tyranny repeatedly overcoming (in this world) the steadfast dedication to pure truth; hence its ever-present, latent, political potential to frame or clothe contemporary discontents.²⁷

This is to say, the Karbala paradigm mirrors the Shi'ah's aspiration for justice and their sense of failure.

Consequently, their identification with their martyred Imam is, to say the least, almost total. Hence, in the modern history of Iran, especially in times of social and political dissent, Husayn's myth has been reenacted more than once in order to equate the people's grievances against the tyrannical state with Imam Husayn's struggle against the oppressive Caliphate of the Umayyads.

Mythical past was therefore rendered reversible and repeatable, not only symbolically and in ritual, but in actuality, in the real world as well. As Chelkowski observes,

In the Shi'ite scheme of the universe, there is a time in which there is no time and a space in which there is no space. What happened to Husayn thirteen centuries ago is repeated today whenever and wherever Shi'ites live and find themselves oppressed.²⁸

This is, in essence, what Fischer means by the myth's potential ability to "frame or clothe contemporary discontents."

Within this context, during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) "many of the early constitutionalists tended to equate themselves with the martyred Imam: thus in order to establish the legitimacy of the anjumans, the semisecret societies established for the support of the constitutionalist cause, it was claimed that the first such anjuman had been founded by Imam Husayn."²⁹ Likewise, the Qajar Shah was termed "Yazid of the age"; the tyranny of the Qajars was compared with that of the Umayyads³⁰; and "Rumors circulated that the Qajar tribe assisted Yazid...in his war against Imam Husayn."³¹ We see, then, that during the Constitutional Revolution the emotional attitudes resulting from the martyrdom of Husayn and the identification with his cause served to inspire hostility against tyranny (the Qajars).

Nevertheless, in the period under consideration (1905-1911), the Karbala paradigm was unable to achieve more than that. The social and political atmosphere has yet to change the 'ulama's attitude from acquiescence to that of a wholehearted and total revolutionary commitment. Accordingly, they have yet to advocate the abolition of the monarchy, whether by force or by constitutional means. Hence, the identification with Husayn's struggle remained

with his failure to realize the aspiration for justice, more than with the struggle itself. The lesson still drawn from the shahadat of Husayn was to avoid useless resistance; and, as an exemplary myth, the Karbala paradigm continued to encourage the passive-accommodative attitude toward reality. As Algar observes, the call for a jihad, resulting from the equation between the Qajars and the Umayyads, was resisted by the 'ulama. Consequently, this equation merely "ensured that the 'ulama' should play a leading role" in the opposition movement against the government.³²

In the 1960's the Karbala paradigm continually resurfaced to "frame or clothe contemporary discontents," until the toppling of the monarchy. During the month of Muharram in 1963, just a few days before the famous June uprising, Taleqani delivered a sermon where he quoted Imam Husayn as appealing to the people of Iran in the present tense:

People, God's has said that if there is an oppressive sultan [the Shah] breaking God's promises, committing sin among the people, disregarding God's orders and acting against God's messenger, it is the duty of everyone... to stand up against him [even]...with power.

And in another sermon during the same period, Taleqani included the following words of Husayn, similarly directed

to the contemporary people of Iran:

This is not a type of revolt that you can cooperate with by giving wealth or giving speeches or giving religious magazines or newspapers to the people, the only way you can cooperate with this revolt (qiyam) is with martyrdom and self-sacrifice....The only help I [Husayn] can get is from those sincere devotees, and heroes, who are willing to sacrifice themselves, who are truly willing to sacrifice their blood.³³

Time and space barriers are once again pulled down, this time by Taleqani in 1963, as he (or Imam Husayn) urges his audience to reenact the Karbala paradigm in actuality. Yet, in contrast to the past, reenacting the myth means not defeat and failure. It is true, the myth still accounted for the present predicament of the Shi'ah, as the Imam's abortive revolt clearly demonstrated. Nevertheless, as the above excerpt clearly shows, the exemplary model offered by Husayn's actions had turned upside down: Husayn was not to be emulated for his ability to win otherworldly gains for his followers; on the contrary, the followers of Imam Husayn, whenever and wherever they are, should be ready to struggle against tyranny and injustice and be willing to become martyrs in this struggle.

Hence the slogan, "Every day is 'Ashura' and every

place is Karbala": every day in the life of a believer is a battle day in which he strives to gain a victory or to die a martyr for the sake of victory. Likewise, wherever the Shi'i may find himself is the battlefield of struggle between the forces of tyranny and the forces of justice. "[A]ll Human history is...a continuous struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. In every age...there is a Husayn, a man who fights on the side of God, and a Yazid, who fights against God."³⁴ Imam Husayn thus emerges as a fearless hero, perfectly aware of the ultimate outcome of his struggle, but equally aware that his martyrdom would set an example for all ages, calling Muslims of successive generations to rise up in revolt against tyranny and oppression. "Husayn, knowing he would die, went to Karbala to witness for the truth, knowing that his death would make him a martyr, an enduring, immortal witness, whose example would be a guide for others."³⁵ The political implications of this view of Imam Husayn was, again, well put by Hegland:

With the world view provided by the ideology here termed 'Imam Husayn as Example', the believer no longer views himself as helpless, powerless, and dependent....[H]e gains a sense of personal power and worth. He is active rather than passive. He feels himself to be capable of working toward his goals in life and of seeking his own salvation, rather than depending on others to do it for him. He believes that individual initiatives and efforts do have an effect so that his own

decisions and actions can make the difference. Rather than modifying his behavior to please someone else...he actively and directly pursues what he wants....[T]he meaning of life is not to get along or get ahead...but to revolt against unjust power.³⁶

On the eve of the the Shah's flight from Iran, just before the beginning of the month of Muharram (December) 1978, Khomeini issued a statement to the Iranian people. The contents of the message mirrored the pinnacle point in the transformation of the Husayn's myth. First, it reflected the completion of the transformation in the Image of Husayn as an exemplary model: Husayn, Khomeini declared,

taught us how to struggle against all the tyrants of history, showed us how the clenched fists of those who seek freedom...may triumph over tanks, machine guns, and the armies of the Satan....[Husayn] taught us that if a tyrant rules despotically over the Muslims in any age, we must rise up against him... owever unequal our forces may be, and that if we see the very existence of Islam in danger, we must sacrifice ourselves and be prepared to shed our blood.³⁷

And finally, Khomeini's message reflected the repeatable nature of the Karbala paradigm -- the reenactment of the battle of Karbala in twentieth century Iran, this time, however, resulting in a victory rather than in a bitter defeat: "The soldiers of Islam," Khomeini urged,

must tear out the remaining roots of this tree of oppression and treachery, for the month of

Muharram is the month in which the forces of Yazid and the stratagems of Satan are defeated.³⁸

Indeed, the events of Muharram 1978 may be described as "the ultimate passion play of the Karbala paradigm"; as "a social drama or a successful passion play."³⁹ A multitude of people in white shrouds took to the streets signifying their willingness to be martyred, like their emulated Third Imam, in the struggle against the "Yazid of the Age" -- the Shah. The traditional mourning processions of the 'Ashura' had turned into massive political marches. In Tehran alone, the protest march attracted nearly two million people: "a giant wave of humanity," the Christian Science Monitor reported, "swept through the capital declaring louder than any bullet or bomb could, the clear message: 'The Shah must go'."⁴⁰ And, indeed, shortly after the events of Muharram 1978, it was clear to all that the monarchy would not last for long. The battle of Karbala had been repeated; Husayn (the nation of Iran) had risen up against Yazid (the Shah), only this time he was victorious. He succeeded where he had failed thirteen centuries ago -- he reinstated the government in the hands of Islam's legitimate rulers.

C. The Karbala Paradigm in the Revolution

"The Karbala paradigm," Fischer writes, "helped unite disparate interest groups into a mass movement against entrenched tyranny. But once the tyranny was removed, a new rhetorical discourse was required. For that...one had to shift to the earlier portions of the paradigm of the family of the Prophet and to the principles of social justice associated with the name 'Ali."⁴¹ Indeed, once the 'ulama' ascended to power in Iran, the appeal to 'Ali's part in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth increased significantly. As I will show in chapter five, 'Ali's exemplary conduct as a statesman, and, in turn, the 'ulama's pretensions to be molding the new Islamic Republic along the lines of 'Ali's government (thus reenacting his myth), have been instrumental in the 'ulama's campaign to legitimize their own rule in the eyes of the masses. Nonetheless, as will be seen below, the manifold internal and external challenges which soon came to threaten the stability of the new regime have inevitably reactivated the Karbala paradigm whenever the political and social atmosphere required the maintenance of mass support and of revolutionary fervor at high pitch. Thus, efforts to affirm the legitimacy of clerical rule by means of 'Ali's part in the cosmogonic myth, came hand in

hand with continuous efforts to ignite revolutionary fervor and sacrifice by means of the Karbala paradigm.

The first full and detailed account of the Karbala paradigm in Friday sermons was given by Khameneh'i in November 14, 1980, more than ten months after the toppling of the ancien regime and just less than a month after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War.⁴² I will return to this sermon later. It is, however, noted here because it might suggest that revolutionary zeal was not at the top of the Islamic regime's agenda until, at least a full month into the Iran-Iraq War. That on the eve of the 'Ashura' (November) 1979, Montazeri haphazardly mentioned that "we are pursuing Imam Husayn's goal" and immediately thereafter turned to devote the bulk of his sermon to the drafting of the constitution,⁴³ might also point to the insignificance of the Karbala paradigm at this pre-war period. Thus Fischer's above observation about the shift to a mood of construction (rather than protest) upon the removal of the monarchy seems to gain more ground. This, however, was not the case. For, immediately following the reinstitution of the khutbah in July 1979, the Karbala paradigm had been reactivated at full power, perhaps not by name, but, by all means, in substance.

In this pre-war period, prayer leaders devoted much time to praising the martyrs of the revolution, urging the nation to "continue their way" and thus safeguard "the fruits of the revolution." A corollary of this were several references to the merits of shahadat. Later, when the Army and the Revolutionary Guards were dispatched to quell the ethnic unrest in Kurdistan, references to the merits of those who became martyrs in the war against "disbelief" quadrupled. Finally, when the Shah was granted entry to the United States in October 1979, leading, respectively, to the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran (November 4), the overall deterioration of U.S.-Iranian relations, and the abortive U.S. rescue mission (April, 1980), the call to the nation to be ready to give martyrs and to shed blood in the war against the "Great Satan" increased significantly. In a word, "The regime fostered the deeply cultural ideal of martyrdom."⁴⁴ Thus the people of Iran were implicitly called upon to emulate their Imam Husayn and sacrifice their lives in the variety of struggles against tyrants and oppressors.

In regard to the first theme -- the glorification of the martyrs of the revolution -- prayer leaders usually commenced their discussion with the following Qur'anic verses:

And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive and are provided sustenance from their Lord; Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who, being left behind them, have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve (3:169-179).

Taleqani, for instance, interpreted (September, 1979) the verse as meaning that true martyrs are only those who are slain in the way of God (fi-sabil Allah) -- be it the result of an armed jihad, emigration (hijrat), or torture. This esteemed position will not be gained by people who departed from the world after they had refrained from struggle, since their earthly efforts, comprising of sheer fasting, praying, and the praising of Allah (takbir), cannot be regarded as "drawing near to God." In short, they do not sacrifice anything in God's way, which is, in essence, "the way of the people" too. True martyrs, Taleqani continued, will find "delight" and "joy," because they reside by God who takes care of all their needs. In short, they are rewarded eternal life. They are therefore not to be mourned or grieved: they are alive with Allah "who has given them out of his grace"; they are alive too, in the sense that their memory is ever-present in society.

Taleqani continued, declaring that all the victims of the revolution, especially those of 17 Shahrivar

(September 8), 1978, (the "Black Friday" massacre at Jaleh Square in Tehran) are shahids, because they struggled for the sake of the people, and therefore for the sake of God. They attained the most sublime position, they became "superior," and they have done so by following the path of the prophets and the great martyrs of Islam. Taleqani concluded, asserting that the nation has "renewed its pledge" to the the martyrs of the revolution, meaning that they will continue their way and pursue their goal -- "resistance to despotism, to exploitation to imperialism," struggle for freedom for all, and for the reinforcement of Islam which has been buried underground for centuries.⁴⁵

It is interesting (perhaps ironic) to comment that Taleqani passed away on September 10, 1979, only three days after his cited sermon. In the following Friday communal sermon (September 14), Montazeri, who immediately took over as the prayer leader of Tehran, referred to Taleqani as a "martyr" of the revolution, reassuring his audience that he too, is not dead or destroyed, but "has mounted to a more sublime world." Like the martyrs of the revolution whom Taleqani had praised in the previous week, he too was acclaimed for "continuing the way of the shuhada'" of Islam. Likewise, Monteziri pleaded with his listeners not to mourn the martyred Ayatollah (for "he is

not dead") and urged them to follow in his footsteps and be ready to shed blood for the "advancement (pishraft) of Islam" and the revolution.⁴⁶

The necessity of following the way of the revolution's martyrs (not to mourn their death) was endowed with a far more realistic and dramatic mood when handled by Khameneh'i. Alluding (March 1980) to a direct contact with the shuhada' of the revolution, Khameneh'i proclaimed that "The martyrs are addressing us, [saying] 'you must continue our way'." The martyrs, he continued, "want us to guard the heritage (miras) of their blood, that is, the Islamic Republic and the victory of the Islamic Revolution." He claimed that the martyrs are pleading with the nation not to lament their fate. On the contrary, they are "encouraging us" to hold "the Qur'an in one hand and a gun in [the other] hand" and to "wage war against all plots and cowardliness (namardi'ha)." Khameneh'i then addressed the martyrs on behalf of the people, saying that "our nation does not perceive your red blood of martyrdom as a loss." He concluded by reassuring the martyrs that the people of Iran "will not abandon your way; the nation will follow your way."⁴⁷

The Kurdish minority in Iran presented a more

persistent and violent challenge to the Khomeini regime than any other minority. "During the transition from the old regime, they had gained -- by default, as it were -- a measure of de facto autonomy, which they attempted to institutionalize and perpetuate under the new regime."⁴⁸ Consequently, in August 1980, after an initial policy of appeasement had failed, the new regime decided to root out Kurdish resistance by force and general mobilization was enforced. A new chapter of the Karbala paradigm thus unfolded, and Kurdistan was destined to become the new battlefield of Karbala.

Addresses to Iranian combatants who were killed in action in Kurdistan echoed previous themes related to the martyrs of the revolution. Once again, they were termed martyrs who "drank the elixir of martyrdom"; and once again it was claimed that they are "gathered (mahshurand) with the martyrs of the advent of Islam," particularly with those of the Battle of Badr and the Battle of Uhud. In a like manner, prayer leaders asked the bereaved families not to grieve their dead, for "there is no better man than he who becomes a shahid in the way of Islam and the Muslim homeland and for defending the Muslims and the Muslim countries." Finally, all living combatants were urged to follow in their footsteps and pursue premature

death.⁴⁹

Two addresses on martyrdom in Kurdistan (both by Khameneh'i) are noteworthy in particular. The first was made in May 1980, during a sermon devoted to "Martyrs Week" (Haftah-'i Shuhada'). Here Khameneh'i coined the unusual term shahidan-i zindah, the "living martyrs," referring to "the great number of our brothers from the army...and the Revolutionary Guards who had not drank the elixir of shahadat in Kurdistan." They "didn't depart from the world but they are living martyrs." These are the injured, he explained, who wanted to become shahids with all their hearts but failed. "They have given their bodies [in order] to reach shahadat," but they were unable to realize their goal however hard they tried. They remained alive, unfortunately, but they are the reincarnation of self-sacrifice.⁵⁰

The second address was made at the following week when Khameneh'i, eager to demonstrate the spirit of self-sacrifice in the Kurdish fronts, cited a short excerpt from a will of a soldier who was fortunate enough to meet his death in Kurdistan, as he himself requested. In a most usual manner, the soldier, named Parviz Karimi, announced that he is about to meet death willingly because his way

is the way of Islam (and, of course, of Imam Khomeini). He also pleaded with his relatives "not to cry for me."⁵¹ (The citation of the wills of soldiers, practically begging to become martyrs, became commonplace during the Iran-Iraq War, as will be seen below.)

The seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran and the prospect of a military confrontation with the United States brought an upsurge in references to martyrdom in Friday sermons. Indeed, given the anti-American tone of the revolution, the taking of the hostages and the consequent developments provided the new regime with a unique means of keeping revolutionary zeal alive in this pre-Gulf War period. All the above themes of martyrdom, its ideal and merits, reappeared with a vengeance. Prayer leaders thus warned the United States that the people of Iran have proven in the past that they are desirous of shahadat, and they will therefore not hesitate to prove it once again, if required to do so in order to thwart off American aggression. It is true, the United States has in possession warships and squadrons of warplanes, which it has brought to the Persian Gulf, but the nation of Iran possesses the "greatest weapon," which is the weapon of "martyrdom and sacrifice."⁵²

Indeed, prayer leaders asserted, the United States, with its "materialistic spectacles" ('ainak-i madigari) and its "polluted and filthy materialism," cannot understand what drives our Iranian youngsters to meet their death in battle; they do not understand "what it is to seek death." They simply cannot comprehend the fact that life continues after temporal death, that "eternal life" awaits the shahid to be. This is why most Americans lost their spirit after they had sustained a meager loss of casualties in the abortive mission to rescue the hostages. The Iranian nation, however, "after giving tens of thousands of shahids, is still willing to struggle and give martyrs in the way of honor, in the way of the Qur'an, in the way of independence and freedom." Even fifteen year old children express their unquenched desire to meet death in battle. Surely, this is why Iran will overcome the present aggressive designs of the United States.⁵³

The discussion hitherto clearly illustrates how "Khomeini...[encouraged] his listeners to relive the martyrdom of Husayn. This, he argues, should be done not merely symbolically during the month of Muharram...but also through the actual pursuit of martyrdom."⁵⁴ However, this push toward experiencing personal martyrdom,

and thus attain "eternal life," reached new heights during the Iran-Iraq war, when the Khomeini regime endeavored to propel the combatants into activism and to advance in the fronts what is commonly known as the "human wave tactic."

In the first two or three years of the war, boundless sermons called on the warriors from the Army, the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij (Mobilization) units, to consider shahadat the means "for your and your revolution's victory." Martyrdom, they repeatedly claimed, is "the greatest reward of a mujahid." It is the most lofty and honorable way to depart from the world, for death in God's way gains the reward of Allah in the hereafter, as well as "historical and global honor and pride." Finally, it was time and again argued that only through the "spirit of shahadat" will the Iranian nation secure a victory over the Iraqi enemy.⁵⁵ Indeed, martyrdom in itself is victory, not defeat, because it is better than living under submission, which is equal to death. As 'Ali reportedly said, al-mawt fi-hayatikum maghurin, wa-al-hayat fi-mawtikum qahirin. And, according to Khameneh'i's somewhat liberal translation and exposition:

Remaining alive under the condition of subjugation to the rule of the superpowers is, in reality, death, whereas [death] through

cutting the bloody claws of the superpowers is life.⁵⁶

In order to substantiate the victorious nature of martyrdom, a few sermons were devoted to the state of the shahid, just as he receives the mortal blow at the battlefield. Rafsanjani, for instance, explained -- citing a hadith about Imam Husayn's companions at Karbala (September 1981) -- that those who are slain in God's way, lam yahissu alam al-hadid, "do not feel the pain of the iron." In other words, "they don't feel any pain when struck by a bullet, an arrow, a spike, [or] a dagger." Consequently, Rafsanjani continued, when such people depart from this world, "They don't see Izra'il [the Angel of Death] -- they only see God"; it is God who seizes their souls, and He does not allow "the Angel of Death" (Malik al-Mawt) to do so.⁵⁷ In another sermon, Rafsanjani informed his audience (April 1983) that "Once the bullet strikes the body of [our warriors] they are carried on the angels' wings [to paradise, where] they reside beside the Prophet of God." Their eternal life commences and they "watch over our affairs from there," Rafsanjani reassured.⁵⁸

Once again, appeals were made to the bereaved families

not to mourn or grieve the loss of their dear ones. Surely, if they have faith in the position their children attain, they should "be cheerful." A bereaved family should "take pride" in their shahid; they "miss him," obviously, but they should always keep in mind that "the spirits of our beloved shahids are joined with the spirits of God's friends, the prophets and the shahids of the dawn of Islam."⁵⁹

And, indeed, the martyrs' families are joyous, not sorrowful, upon hearing that their dear children have been killed in action. Numerous references to the cheerful reactions of parents whose children became shahids in the Iran-Iraq War have been made in Friday sermons. Rafsanjani, for instance, related (September 1981) a shocking story he heard from an eyewitness about a parent who had come to claim the corpse of his son:

The head of a shahid was cut off...[by] the Saddams (Saddamiyan)....We brought his corpse to Isfahan. His father came, wanting to see his child. At first we prevented him. Later he was told that the corpse has not head. He replied, 'It makes no difference'. Upon approaching and seeing the corpse, he placed his lips on the separated head and kissed it. There was not even the slightest sign of emotion on his face. He said: 'My God! I thank my child, my son, for becoming a shahid in the way of God. He had become a shahid in the same manner that [Imam] Husayn...had been slain'.⁶⁰

Thus, once the families hear about the death of their

loved ones, they "become joyful, they say tabrik [blessing], they take pride" in it. Moreover, if they have another child, they send him to war at once, "so that the place of the shahid would not remain vacant."⁶¹

Within this context, prayer leaders have argued that the conduct of Iranian families whose children have "reached shahadat" is nothing less than equivalent to the conduct of the bereaved families at the advent of Islam. Hence, their conduct may be viewed as an emulation of the exemplary behavior offered in the early parts of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth. Consider, for instance, the following words of Rafsanjani (August 1981):

We read some things in the history of the beginning of Islam which makes the hair on our body to stand on end. Like [that woman] in the Battle of Uhud who seized her son [after] he had fled from the war and told him: 'My child. You won't be considered my lawful son if you don't return [to the battlefield] and become a shahid'....This was very important for us....A certain...lady who was a polytheist [and] later became a Muslim had cried much when a few of her sons had died in [a state of] disbelief.... [Later] a few of them became shahids [in the service of] 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib...and she sang joyful hymns for them. This was very important for us....[And today,] how many a film have we seen [in which] mothers take pride in the shahadat of their children and do not allow the tears to come out from their eyes....Many people are like that; [our] women are like that; the men are like that; the youngster are like that.⁶²

And so are the combatants themselves. More than anyone else they are desirous of "drinking the elixir of martyrdom" in the battlefield. Their aspiration to become shahids exceeds all limits. They haste to the fronts with one intention: to reach shahadat. They "have been slain with no apprehension in the field of sacrifice and jihad"; they have "gratuitously given their blood...for removing the curtains of darkness and oppression," and they will continue to do so "for the country of the revolution and for the land of Islam."⁶³ In fact, they practically beg to be allowed to become shahids: they "cry, shed tears, pleading [with their superiors], 'Take me along to the nightly operation so that I may become a shahid'."⁶⁴ When their hope remains unfulfilled, they try again, they repeatedly expose their bodies to the bullets of the enemy. If they remain alive (Alas!), they immediately return to the battlefield with full valor hoping that their thirst for martyrdom will be quenched at last.⁶⁵

According to prayer leaders, the soldiers' uncontrolled thirst for premature death is displayed in their last wills. One such last will was read by Khameneh'i in October 1980: the shahid to be begins by asking his mother to accept his decision to meet death "with a kind heart." His martyrdom should easily be

accepted by the mother given the fact that he would experience it "in the way of God, for religion and for the homeland (mihan).\" The soldier then expresses his hope that his desire to reach shahadat would be fulfilled. Indeed, he says, "I was close" to attaining this goal "many times," ultimately with no success. "Perhaps," he continues, "I am not worthy of being a shahid because a shahid has an exalted and sublime position," whereas "I'm a sinful and despised individual." The soldier then proclaims that he is proceeding to the front "not for revenge, but in order to revive my faith and to advance my revolution." "My aim," he says, "is God, my religion is Islam, and my desire is the spirit of God." The soldier signs his will asserting that he would endure every bullet wound for "the remembrance of God," pledging that his pain will be "sweeter than honey."⁶⁶

In his article "Stamps of Blood," Chelkowski examines an Iranian double stamp issued in 1986 for the "Universal Day of the Child." The left-hand stamp portrays a child throwing himself with a grenade under an Iraqi tank. The left-hand stamp includes, in addition to the child's portrait, the following words of Khomeini: "Our guide is that boy of twelve years of age. The value of his little heart is greater than could be described by hundreds of

tongues and hundreds of pens. He threw himself with a grenade under an enemy tank and destroyed it. [In doing so] he drank the sweet elixir of martyrdom."⁶⁷ Thus, children too, have joined the quest for martyrdom in the Iran-Iraq War. Indeed, the heads of the regime denied that they have been sending young children to take part in the war. They noted, however, "that when they themselves ask to go to the front and their parents give their permission too...they have no choice. After all, they argued, they have no right to prevent youngsters...to leave for a jiḥād."⁶⁸ Within this context, Khameneh'i read a letter of an eight year old child whose dream was to become a shahid in the war, despite his parents refusal. "Would to God," the child reportedly wrote, "that I grow up fast and go to the the war [with] Iraq." Although his efforts to reach shahadat have been postponed for the meanwhile, the child asked Khameneh'i to "Pray so that my mother would become a shahid, because she wants to become a shahid with all her heart."⁶⁹

Just as the conduct of the bereaved families drew its inspiration from the exemplary behavior of their counterparts at the advent of Islam, so does the quest for martyrdom of Iranian combatants was modeled after that of the mujahidin at the time of the Prophet. Thus Khameneh'i

referred (November 1980) to the young men at the time of the Prophet who, soon after their marriage ceremony, rushed to the fronts of the jihad and soon thereafter became shahids. This, Khameneh'i announced, is repeated today: "In Ahvaz, a young man walked into the bridal chamber at midnight, proceeded to the front at 5 a.m., and became a shahid at 7 a.m."⁷⁰

The spirit of shahadat among the warriors thus became a formidable weapon and at the same time a resumption (reenactment) of an old Islamic tradition (myth). It is such, Khameneh'i explained in March 1981, because the entire world is against us in the war and so the only forcible means of gaining a victory is shahadat. Likewise, "Abraham rose up against disbelief of the age (kufr-i zaman) alone; Moses had only his brother on his side [when] he went to war against the oppression of the Pharaoh; Jesus, Job and Noah...and all the divine prophets had nothing but the power of truth when they set out against global kufr." What, then was the secret of their victory?; "How come the Prophet of Islam, who [was] alone at that time...[while] all the jahili world...opposed him, was able to arrive in Medina and establish a government"

and later conquer the entire world?

The secret of all this lies in one issue -- the secret of the victory of Abraham, the secret of the victory of Moses, the secret of the victory of the Prophet of Islam...as well as the secret of the great victory of the Islamic Revolution ...is found in one issue, namely, that people among the servants of God are willing to sacrifice their lives...they seek shahadat.... We must [therefore] guard this spirit of shahadat-seeking.⁷¹

When the Iran-Iraq War entered its sixth year, Rafsanjani devoted, in a most typical manner at that time, an entire sermon to the issue of the people's "preparedness" (amadagi) to continue the war until "final victory." He stressed that the Iranian people "have not grown weary" of the war, and that "The enemy is horrified by your presence at the front." This is so, he explained, because the enemy knows well that "should the Imam [Khomeini] raise his finger," the Iranian mujahidin "will storm the strongholds of Saddam and the Ba'th like a flood which storms a house."⁷² Doubtlessly, in 1985-86 the Gulf war had already become a major source of resentment and a burden rather than a "divine blessing bestowed upon the Muslim nation of Iran." Indeed, the continuous Iraqi missile attacks on Iranian cities, the Iraqi use of chemical weapon and the mounting casualties of war finally eroded the very same "preparedness" of the people

Rafsanjani had pointed to.

The weariness from the lingering war, coupled with the absence of a settlement in sight, was noticeable in sermons, as direct references to martyrdom and martyrdom-seeking in the Iran-Iraq War gradually declined. It seems that prayer leaders themselves had become tired of being routinely required to elaborate on the combatants' desire for death or on the families' willingness to give martyrs. This trend was already noticeable in the end of 1983, much earlier than expected. It is true, prayer leaders still commented on the nation's sacrifices in the war, but the previously abundant elaborations and presentations were surprisingly scarce. It seems (from reading between the lines) that prayer leaders were now concerned, not so much with the perpetuation of revolutionary zeal, as with its renewal, although they never acknowledged that the nation's (and, perhaps, their own) fervor had waned. Hence, repetition of statements in post-1983 sermons whereby "all people are obliged to always be prepared for the struggle against the enemy and to extend this preparedness."⁷³ Needless to say, with the termination of the Iran-Iraq War in July 1988, references to martyrdom practically disappeared, as the emphasis was now laid on "reconstruction" rather than on protest and revolutionary

zeal.

It is interesting to note, that the disclosure of the U.S. arms sales to Iran in 1986, and even more so, the U.S. decision of March 1987 to extend military protection to Kuwaiti tankers which were endangered in the Gulf tanker war, reactivated the radicalism so common to Iranian foreign policy in the first years of the revolution, but not the corresponding theme of martyrdom. Instead, prayer leaders chose to revive the theme of the eternal confrontation between the mustaz'afin and the mustakbarin as will be discussed in chapter seven. Such was also the case after Khomeini called for the execution of Salman Rushdie, author of The Satanic Verses, in February 1989. This may suggest that the theme of martyrdom had been fully exhausted in sermons by that time. This assumption should gain more currency if we take into account the domination of sermons devoted to martyrdom during the hostages crisis in 1979-1980.

Let's return to the concluding years of the Iran-Iraq War, to the point where prayer leaders have exhorted the people to renew the overwhelming militancy of the past. To this end, an indirect or implied call to emulate Imam Husayn and pursue martyrdom, however elaborate it may be,

was not sufficient; in order to propel the nation to "renew their pledge" to the martyrs of the revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, so it seemed to prayer leaders, should be presented as an actual reenactment of the battle of Karbala, both in name and in substance. Thus, beginning in 1986, the Iranian war campaigns have, by and large, been called "Karbala I," "Karbala II," and so on. This was obviously intended to inspire believers to follow in the footsteps of Husayn and to revive the momentum of sacrifice and martyrdom. Numerous sermons offered elaborate accounts on the Karbala operations.⁷⁴ Moreover, beginning in 1985 and for the same purpose, all recruited individuals who were about to be dispatched to the fronts were termed in sermons Rahiyān-i Karbala, "those who are about to embark on their journey to Karbala," or, Karavan-i Karbala, "the caravans of Karbala."⁷⁵

Representations of the war as a reenactment of the battle of Karbala have been conveyed in sermons since the inception of the conflict, however. They superseded the conventional or plain references to martyrdom, inasmuch as explicit allusions to the Karbala paradigm were probably viewed as a far more effective mechanism for maintaining, and later reviving, the much needed revolutionary zeal.

Indeed, given the profound identification of the Shi'ah with their martyred Imam (see above, section B), it was only natural for the regime to display the war as a struggle between "Husayn of the Age" and "Yazid of the Age," thus make the believers understand where their obligations lay. In essence, there was nothing new in presenting the battlefields of the Gulf war as the battlefield of Karbala. The tendency to turn contemporary struggles into a "New Karbala" was already noticeable, as discussed above, in the Constitutional Revolution and during the struggle against Muhammad Reza Shah. The equation of the Iran-Iraq War with Husayn's battle thirteen centuries ago may therefore be viewed as the culmination of this trend.

The first essential requirement for turning the war into a "second Karbala" was, of course, to equate the warring factions with the corresponding protagonists of the myth of Husayn. Thus, the Iraqi ruler, Saddam Husayn, has been styled in sermons "Saddam-Yazid," just as the Iranian Shah before him had been termed "Shah-Yazid."⁷⁶ Hence, the Iranian nation is confronting the "Yazids, Shimrs, and Ibn Ziyads," who are personified today by "Saddam and the [Michel] 'Aflaqs of Iraq."⁷⁷ This also accounted for a slogan shouted by the crowd attending the

Friday sermon in September 1986, whereby "Muharram is the month of blood; Saddam is destroyed" (Muharram mah-'i khun ast; Saddam sarnagun ast).⁷⁸ However, Saddam-Yazid differs from his seventh century counterpart -- something which makes him a more detested foe:

On that day ['Ashura'], Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah had no master (arbab), but today Saddam-Yazid of Iraq has a master -- global istikbar and criminal U.S. are of his masters which give him orders.⁷⁹

It is noteworthy, that prayer leaders abruptly ceased to apply the name Yazid to the Iraqi ruler at the end of 1981. The term "Saddam-Yazid" was virtually nonexistent in all subsequent sermons, from November 1981 to August 1988 (when cease-fire was declared), despite the continuing equation of the war with the battle of Karbala. This might also point to a certain degree of fatigue in the regime's war rhetoric.

All in all, however, the equation of the Iraqi regime with the forces of Yazid was naturally followed by the necessary equation of the Iranian nation with the forces of Husayn. Thus Khameneh'i read to his audience (April 1981) a letter written by an Iraqi woman, in which she called the Iranian nation "The supporters ('ansar) of Abi 'Abd-Allah al-Husayn," and "the companions (yan) of Husayn." The woman reportedly added, according to

Khameneh'i, al-Husayn fi-Karbala yastasrihkum, "Husayn in Karbala is crying for your help."⁸⁰

This last sentence is of prime importance. It is an obvious allusion to the people of Kufa whose last moment betrayal of Imam Husayn added to the disproportionate balance of power at the battle of Karbala, consequently securing the revolt's defeat. Khameneh'i (or the Iraqi woman) is therefore implying here that the people of Iran should not turn their backs to Imam Husayn (i.e, the Iraqi people) like the people of Kufa had, but respond to his cries for help and join his revolt -- like the Imam's seventy-two martyred companions had. In another sermon Rafsanjani clarified (June 1985) the Iranian nation's position on this issue: "We are not the people of Kufa" (ma ahl-i Kufa nistim), he proclaimed. The Iraqi enemy knows well, he concluded, that, unlike the people of Kufa, "even indifferent people will take weapons in their hands [if] their revolution and country are endangered."⁸¹

Nonetheless, in order to underline Iran's chosen position in the war, Rafsanjani delivered a lengthy sermon in October 1981, in which he traced "four groups" in the events of the 'Ashura'. The first, he argued, were "those who followed Sayyid al-Shuhada' strongly and decisively,"

namely, the Imam's seventy-two companions. A representative of this group, Rafsanjani continued, was 'Abd-Allah 'Ansari. As he fell to the ground on the day of the 'Ashura', Husayn approached him. The shahid to be opened his "blood-stained" eyes and asked: "O [Husayn]! Have I fulfilled my obligation?" Husayn replied: na'm, wa-anta amami fi-al-jannah, "Yes indeed, and so you will be in heaven before me."

The second group, according to Rafsanjani, "were influenced by an evil eye" (chashm mi'khurand). They had demonstrated a degree of self-sacrifice, but not to the extent of the first group. A representative of this group was 'Abd-Allah Mashriqi who "sought the honor of Sayyid al-Shuhada'" in order to inform the Imam of his decision to leave the camp. He then reportedly added, "I will remain as long as my presence is beneficial for you, but [when] your companions become shahids and your martyrdom [too] would be definitive, allow me to return." Accordingly, once all of the Imam's companions reached their shahadat, the man surrendered to the camp of Yazid. However, Rafsanjani disclosed, "history has it that this man had always cried; he used to come to the grave of Sayyid al-Shuhada' grieving [and] uttering: 'O Husayn! What a mistake I have made; I wish that on that day I too

would had been part of the other group and become a shahid'."

The third group were "the impartial and neutral people of Iraq, people who chose the words precaution, reason [and] providence, instead of jihad, resoluteness, forbearance (sabr), calamity, hardships, and sacrifice." They sat idly by, passively watching how Husayn and his companions are slain one by one. Among this group was a wealthy man called 'Abd-Allah Ja'fi. When asked by Husayn to join his revolt, the man replied: "I'm not prepared [to go to] war, but I shall give [you] horses, I shall give money." On account of his reluctance to sacrifice himself for truth (haqq), Husayn replied: "I want nothing from you." It is not a type of revolt that you can cooperate with by giving wealth. The only way to cooperate with this revolt is through martyrdom and self-sacrifice.

Lastly, there was a group that was "great from the standpoint of quantity, but vain (puch) from the standpoint of quality." They were the Umayyads and their supporters who "had stood against [Husayn] until the evening of the 'Ashura' when they mutilated (qat' qat' kardand) his blessed corpse."

After examining all four groups, Rafsanjani then explained their relevance to the present state of affairs in the Gulf war and in Iran at large. "We must," he said, "draw lessons from the tragedy of the 'Ashura', view these groups, and make an effort to be part of [the first] group." He confirmed that the second and third groups are present in twentieth century Iran. Surely, he said, they are "a mere minority." Nevertheless, their indifferent attitude toward the war and the situation in the fronts is inconceivable; they are "unable to give of their blood." Their fate is like the fate of 'Abd-Allah Mashriqi of the second group, who, following Husayn's martyrdom, had always cried, lamenting his failure to reach shahadat in the support of "God, the Prophet and Islam."

The fourth group exists in Iran too. They are, according to Rafsanjani, "the deluded youngsters" who "oppose the revolution." They are "children"; they are like those who refused to listen to Husayn's words and pleas: "They clapped their hands, they applauded" in order not to be able to listen to his words of truth. In a like manner, they refuse to listen to the words of truth of the Islamic Republic of Iran; they are "deaf to the words of haqq." (Rafsanjani is obviously referring here to the supporters of the Mujahidin-i Khalq.)

However, the majority of the Iranian people, Rafsanjani asserted, are part of the first group -- that which followed the Imam with resolution and decisiveness. Indeed, he said, Iran

is now part of that group that had followed Abi 'Abd-Allah [Imam Husayn]; the massive population...the decisive majority are following him....[B]ut the [remaining] three groups, although small [in number], are also seen in this country, and as long as we live, as long as we are not dead, we will strive not to be part of the [other] three groups.⁸²

Thus, the war fronts of the Islamic Revolution are the war front of Imam Husayn.⁸³ Or, in the words of Khameneh'i (November 1980): "Today, the sons of Husayn...have brought [Husayn's] presence (mawjudi) to the arena. This presence is [that] of a nation standing against the political and military machineries of the world." The nation "wants to prove that they are the sons of Husayn and that they are pursuing Husayn's goal." In short, all of our combatants "are like the soldiers of Husayn ibn 'Ali in the 'Ashura'" -- they are desirous of martyrdom.⁸⁴

More precisely, it is the Revolutionary Guards who were first and foremost viewed by prayer leaders as the

"sons" of Imam Husayn, as his true followers and the embodiments of his way and goal. The Iranian army was excluded. (This seems to confirm Menashri's observation, made before a cease-fire was concluded between Iran and Iraq, that "The grinding nature of the war may...give rise to the politicization of the army.....Aware of such dangers, the revolutionary leaders have extolled the roles of the [Revolutionary Guards] and the Basij...in Iran's victories, but they were careful not to give too much credit to the army -- a deliberate policy intended to prevent the army from becoming a political threat to the regime."⁸⁵) Thus, the Revolutionary Guards (which, incidentally, have been founded on Imam Husayn's birthday) were depicted as "a part of the same seventy-two" companions of Husayn⁸⁶; and as a "movement that exposes itself to danger for Islam, for haqq...something [which resembles] Imam Husayn's way."⁸⁷ In short, their conduct in the war "is the same way of Imam Husayn; they are the same companions of Imam Husayn who, in the evening of the 'Ashura', [in] the best hours of their life, [have heard] the glad tidings from Imam Husayn that tomorrow they will become shahids."⁸⁸

Having distinguished between the warring factions, time and space barriers have been pulled down at last. In

other words, the Iran-Iraq War was not to be a "second Karbala," but Karbala itself, the same battle that took place thirteen centuries ago. Consider, for instance, the following passage in which Khameneh'i totally identified between the events of 12th of Muharram, 680, and the events of 12th of Muharram (November), 1980, in the war front. Note how he shifts so naturally from past to present and how the two separate and distant days become one: The 12th of Muharram, he said,

is the day in the glorious history of the 'Ashura' [when] the bodies of our stainless shahids were still [lying] on the bereaved soil of Karbala, the day when 'Ali's daughter [was taken] prisoner, the day when Husayn's... oppressed voice asking for help was still echoing in the open space of Karbala, the day when the eternally kindled torch of shahadat was trampled under the boots of the brutal Yazidi animals in order to extinguish it. And the 12th of our Muharram, that is, the 12th of Muharram of Iran's 'Ashura' and of Iran's Karbala is like the 12th of Muharram of the Husayni Karbala. The corpses of our shahids have yet to be properly assembled, reminiscence of those resolved faces who, for the love of [their] religion and for God, have shielded themselves against the enemy's bullets with their breasts....O our beloved shahids! O our sacrificing children!....Your memory is alive in our minds and hearts; our 'Ashura' is today.⁸⁹

More than that, the circumstances leading to Imam Husayn's martyrdom and his own determination to stage a revolt, even though all the odds were against him, have

been repeated today by Iran in its confrontation with Iraq. For instance, in his speech before the sermon Falsafi referred (April 1985) to the increasing international pressure on Iran to accept Iraqi overtures for a cease-fire. He then mentioned that the people of Kufa "had left Imam Husayn alone," but he proceeded to Karbala anyway. According to Falsafi, Imam Husayn then proclaimed: "I will never extend a abject hand to Yazid, and I prefer an honorable death over disgraceful life." In other words, Falsafi explained, Husayn had risen up against Yazid "although he was alone." Falsafi went on to say, equating the circumstances during Husayn's revolt with those in the Iran-Iraq War,

In spite of all the assistance the East and the West are extending to the Saddam regime, our warriors are standing firm in the fronts, and our nation will never accept a disgraceful, imposed peace....[T]he war will continue until final victory!⁹⁰

As was the case with elaborations on shahadat, so did references to the Karbala paradigm and to the Iran-Iraq conflict as the reenactment of the battle of Karbala meet an abrupt end with the termination of the war in July 1988. "In the postwar...situation," Menashri writes, "reconstruction has become the order of the day."⁹¹ But while the war was still in progress and portrayed as the

battle of Karbala, two distinct incidents, one in Iran and the other abroad, have set in motion two additional battles of Karbala.

The first incident occurred in June 28, 1981, when two large bombs exploded at the central headquarters of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP) in Tehran, where a meeting of party leaders was in progress. The explosions (allegedly set off by the mujahidin-i Khalq) killed at least seventy-four of the party's and of Iran's top leaders, including the IRP's secretary general, Ayatollah Muhammad Beheshti.⁹² However, in order to utilize the religious fervor of the Husayn paradigm to excite the masses, time and space barriers have been once again pulled down, and so only seventy-two deaths, not including Beheshti's, were reported. The victims of the IRP explosion thus became one with the seventy-two companions of Imam Husayn, and Beheshti with the martyred Imam. Numerous sermons grieved the shahadat of "Beheshti and the seventy-two companions...of the Imam [Khomeini]."⁹³

Two references to the IRP fatalities, both made by Rafsanjani in August 1981, are noteworthy. In the first, Rafsanjani mentioned "the martyrdom of more than seventy-two persons" in the IRP explosion, "that is, seventy-four

persons, with two person who joined them later"; and in the second, he simply put the total of fatalities at "seventy and some (haftad va-chand) persons."⁹⁴ It is thus evident that Rafsanjani was unwilling to completely disregard the historical truth, realizing, perhaps, that his audience are knowledgeable, if not of the precise number of casualties in the explosion, at least of the possibility that the number does not quite correspond with the seventy-two martyrs of Karbala. By leaving the total of fatalities at seventy-two, Rafsanjani is therefore aware that the equation of the Karbala tragedy with the IRP tragedy might backfire. As mentioned (see chapter two), the power of myths stems from their narration of past events which are relevant to the present. To put it differently, myths are effective only if they are capable of describing the existing circumstances as reflecting a "sacred" primordial event. Conversely, if society is aware that the existing circumstances do not conform with the particular primordial event, a myth runs the risk of losing its efficacy. By recognizing that his audience are suspicious of the official count of the IRP "martyrs" -- that the present circumstances differ from the circumstances at Karbala -- Rafsanjani implicitly acknowledges the futility of an effective equation of the IRP explosion with the battle of Karbala. He is therefore

trying to perform the impossible task of presenting a somewhat modified (perhaps more reliable) account of the IRP tragedy that will correspond to an extent with the Karbala paradigm, and at the same time not be viewed as a distortion of the existing circumstances.

The second incident which occasioned the emergence of the Karbala paradigm occurred in August 1987, during the Hajj ceremonies in Mecca, when approximately four hundred Iranian pilgrims were killed after Saudi police opened fire on them.⁹⁵ The bitter political and ideological rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, coupled with the annually increasing tensions between the two regimes over Iranian attempts to utilize the Hajj for promoting its own brand of politicized Islam, have provided the background for this staging of the battle of Karbala on Saudi soil.⁹⁶

Within this context, prayer leaders were especially keen on pointing out that "the mercenaries of the House of Sa'ud" had "closed the flight passages" to fleeing Iranian pilgrims, as well as "blocking any assistance to them," thus deliberately causing their shahadat.⁹⁷ This, no doubt, is an allusion to the Umayyads' denial of the Euphrate's water to the companions of Imam Husayn.

Moreover, prayer leaders pledged that the effects of Saudi actions at the Hajj will be similar to those of the 'Ashura'. As Khameneh'i explained,

We believe that the truth of the massacre... will be made clear to history and to the people of the world, just like the oppressed state of Ahl al-Bayt [the Household of the Prophet] at the battle of Karbala has....[T]his tragedy is something than can neither be concealed nor covered.⁹⁸

Thus, the Saudi regime has been rendered "the children of Yazid," and the Umayyads the "forefathers" of the House of Saud. In a word, "This is the blood of the Shimrs and the Yazids which is flowing in the veins of the...rulers of Saudi Arabia"⁹⁹; "they have gone the same way as the [Umayyads]."¹⁰⁰

The myth of Husayn has been instrumental in the Islamic regime's campaign of keeping the revolutionary zeal of the masses at fever pitch during various phases of the revolution. The regime harnessed the Karbala paradigm to its cause in every political crisis: first, during the separatist unrest in Kurdistan; then, during the American hostages affair; and later, during the Iran-Iraq War. Once the war against Iraq began, the myth of Husayn was reactivated at full power, becoming the focus of anti-Iraqi propaganda.

Nevertheless, the eruption of war had also triggered elaborate references to the Karbala paradigm with no direct relation to the ongoing conflict. Hand in hand with representations of the war as the battle of Karbala, prayer leaders allocated much time to independent narrations of the 'Ashura' events, focusing on the interpretive and exemplary dimensions of the tragedy. The remaining part of this chapter will therefore examine how the Karbala myth has been portrayed in sermons, and what interpretive and exemplary lessons were drawn from it. This may clarify to what degree the myth has been transformed and, by implication, why the Islamic regime has been so fond of equating its own struggles with that of Imam Husayn.

Narrations of the 'Ashura' in Friday sermons usually focused on the scene where Imam Husayn holds his six month old child 'Ali Asghar in his hands, facing the formidable Umayyad army. Husayn, we are told, pleads with the enemy to spare the child's life, but instead an arrow is shot immediately killing the baby. Husayn then raises the slain child above his hands to show everyone 'Ali Asghar's blood. No one understands, prayer leaders claimed, what Husayn has in mind: "Once again the divine politics remained unknown to the inwardly blind." They do not

realize that from that very moment Husayn "signed his scroll of truth," that is, "he let the world understand against which movement he is standing, he let history understand against whom he is fighting."¹⁰¹ Or, in the words of Rafsanjani (September 1986), Husayn brought his child of tender years to the battlefield, not in order to gain the enemy's pity, "but to show the [true] essence of the kufri government of Damascus."¹⁰²

Hence the cognitive-interpretive aspect of the dominant version of the Karbala paradigm in revolutionary Iran. 'Ali Asghar's martyrdom in Karbala was intended to reveal the "essence of the Umayyad clique to the people" and "to throw light" on their criminal acts.¹⁰³ In other words, it was intended to explain to the Shi'ah, as Eliade puts it, their "structure of reality," the reason for their oppressed state in the present being the cruelty and inhumane acts of the Umayyads thirteen centuries ago.

This and more, the tragedy of the 'Ashura' in its entirety was but a divine plan, originally drawn at the beginning of time in order to explain the "structure of reality" to all successive Shi'i generations. Thus, Rafsanjani explained (November 1981), the martyrdom of Husayn was by no means a personal venture; it was included

in the "Prophet's revelation," in the "Prophet's secrets (asrar)," and in the Qur'an itself."¹⁰⁴ In short, only after the tragedy of Karbala it became clear that Husayn's martyrdom was a plan to demonstrate "the anti-vilayat, the anti-truth course of istikbar."¹⁰⁵ Or, to put it differently, "God has created you [Husayn]...so that you would remove the veil (pardah) and reveal the truth to the people."¹⁰⁶

This was also the reason, unknown at the time, for Husayn's insistence to take his household to Karbala along with him, despite his prior knowledge of the revolt's outcome. Within this context, prayer leaders noted that friends and relatives made enormous efforts to convince the Imam not to embark on his endeavor. Husayn, however, had only one thing to say: "I must go." Later, when they realized that Husayn is not about to change his mind they pleaded with him to spare the women and children: "Why are you taking the children? Why are you taking your women and children?" they repeatedly asked him. To the bewilderment of all Husayn replied: "It is God's wish that they would be taken prisoners"; they will be entrusted with the heavy burden of remaining alive to tell of the tragedy that befell the believers and of the atrocities of Yazid.¹⁰⁷ They would join the Imam's revolt for no other reason.

And, indeed, it was up to the prisoners of Karbala to expose the crimes of the Umayyads, and this was done nowhere else but in Yazid's own court. By means of their efforts, the tragedy of Husayn would remain the possession of the Prophet's community. The caravan that took them to Damascus as prisoners thus became Karavan-i tabligh-i Karbala, "The caravan of the propagation of [the tragedy] of Karbala."¹⁰⁸ Zaynab and Zayn al-Abidin, Husayn's sister and his only surviving son (the Fourth Imam) respectively, assumed the leadership of the prisoners' "movement," and it was above all due to their courageous conduct at Yazid's court that all subsequent generations of believers came to know of the "primordial event" which had made them what they are.

Zaynab, Rafsanjani explained in December 1981, "had a mission (risalat) to make the world understand that Yazid is a usurper (ghasib), a tyrant (zalim) and inhuman, and that the movement of the Umayyads opposes Islam." In the presence of Yazid, his courtiers and the people of Damascus, she defied the Caliph by calling him ibn al-tulqa', "the son of the released" (referring to the conquest of Mecca when the Prophet released the ancestors of the Umayyads although they were of the unbelievers).

She said, "Look at this Yazid, the son of those whom our grandfather had released...in the conquest of Mecca while they were unbelievers"; look how he brought here "the children of the releasers" (azad kunandah) in such a cruel manner and has allowed "the children of the released" to sit and watch them as though they were attending a show. Such was the courage of "one prisoner in the assembly of one deluded king." Indeed, the impact of her words was such that "the ambassador of Rum who was present at the session embraced Islam and also rebelled against Yazid." Moreover, the result of Zaynab's courageous words, according to Rafsanjani, was "that Yazid received reports that people everywhere had gathered to avenge the blood of the [martyrs] of Karbala"; "Within a few days the town of Damascus was filled with information about the tragedy of Karbala."¹⁰⁹ Thus Zaynab fulfilled her obligation: the "primordial event" was now the common knowledge of all believers.

It was now Zayn al-Abidin's turn to hammer the atrocities of the Umayyads into the minds of the people. He too, gave a fearless sermon at the court of Yazid, relating the events of the 'Ashura', as the result of which "the people wept altogether." In a word, the Fourth Imam has shown the people of Damascus that their's was the

side of "a blood-thirsty wolf" which trampled the "way of truth."¹¹⁰

Finally, prayer leaders have argued that Imam Husayn's determination to stage a revolt against Yazid, in spite of his inferior position and his prior knowledge that he would be slain, stemmed from his willingness to expose the tyrannical nature of the Umayyads. Hence his insistence to proceed to Karbala, despite the reluctance of the people of Kufa to assist him. In other words, prayer leaders claimed, if Husayn were to conduct his battle with a substantial number of supporters and be slain under regular circumstances of combat, his mission to expose the crimes of the Umayyads, and make the world understand the "primordial event," would have ended with a failure.¹¹¹ Or as Imami-Kashani put it (September 1985), if Imam Husayn knew of the fate awaiting him in Karbala, "how come is it that [he] had gone to meet his martyrdom?" And his answer was one: "If Imam Husayn were to speak to the people for a thousand years, he would not have gained such a victory," that is, "leave such an impression on the people."¹¹²

We see then that the cognitive-interpretive essence of the Karbala paradigm had not changed along with the

transformation of the myth. Its pre- and post-revolutionary versions alike account for the Shi'ah's predicament in the present, for their oppressed state as a persecuted sect. And both versions do so by delineating the injustice that was committed against the Third Imam -- the very "primordial event" that resulted in the believers' present "structure of reality."

This continuity in the interpretive role of the myth, however, did not apply, as expected, to the exemplary-behavioral lessons drawn from the shahadat of Imam Husayn. Post-Pahlavi Iran still clings to the prevalent view of the 1970's whereby "Knowing what the outcome of the battle would be, Husayn made the decision to fight anyway, for he believed that his death would...set an example for all ages, calling Muslims of successive generations to rise up and fight against tyranny and godlessness."¹¹³ Thus, prayer leaders claimed, Husayn demonstrated to the world what sacrifice is, and how to rise up against formidable enemies with little or no assistance and support:

He didn't say I'm alone; he didn't say all are against me....He didn't say I'm weak because I'm fighting a useless war. Between the two ways of truth and false (haqq va-batil), he decisively chose haqq and was prepared to give his life away in the way of this haqq.¹¹⁴

Thus the object of Imam Husayn was that history would draw

the necessary lessons from his martyrdom and that man would emulate his way: "He wanted to let the whole world understand that in times when conditions are such that a government is oppressive, that the Qur'an is abandoned, that the people who wield power are alien to God and to religion...every man...is duty-bound to rise up in revolt."¹¹⁵

This was also the object of Imam Husayn's seventy-two companions. They too, were determined to stay with Husayn, knowing all too well that their martyrdom was imminent. Indeed, the Imam urged them to leave, to escape death by taking advantage of the night. But they vehemently rejected Husayn's proposal. They said, "Brother! Should we go? What kind of a suggestion is this? Is there any value to life after you?" Or as one companion commented: "I wish to be slain a thousand times in your way which is God's way." After I die, "I wish I could come to life...and be slain once again -- there is nothing sweeter for us than this."¹¹⁶

In short, Husayn has shown the world that man must struggle and be prepared to shed blood for the sake of a "sacred ideal" (arman); man must experience hardships -- he must sacrifice himself and forsake his own life.

Surely, if he would adopt Imam Husayn's way, "Your enemy is the one who shall be without prosperity" (the Qur'an, 108:3).¹¹⁷ And, indeed, Imam Husayn's exemplary conduct, according to prayer leaders, has left its imprint on human (particularly Islamic) history, for people have always been prepared to follow his course. Rafsanjani, for instance, said the following words about Imam Husayn's legacy (May 1982):

When one gazes at history after Imam Husayn, he sees that Imam Husayn brought the Umayyads down, that the blood of Imam Husayn overthrew (zalil kard) the 'Abbasids, that the blood of Imam Husayn brought down the government of Pars, that the government of Idris in [North] Africa [originated] from Imam Husayn's blood, that the government of the Fatimids in Egypt [ascended] from Imam Husayn....If one looks he sees that all these [movements] drew their inspiration from Imam Husayn's way and have been agitated (jushidah) from Imam Husayn's blood.¹¹⁸

And such was, of course, the movement which brought about the Islamic revolution in Iran. The "revolutionary participation" of the nation in the struggle against the Shah, prayer leaders contended, "is an illustration of the historical and social influence of the 'Ashura' of... Husayn on the lives of our people"; the revolutionary movement was but a "revival of the spirit of the Husayni movement," and of "the spirit of Karbala and [of] Husayn."¹¹⁹ Also today, prayer leaders concluded, the

nation of Iran is continuing to follow in Imam Husayn's footsteps. Indeed, Rafsanjani proclaimed (October 1981), speaking directly to Imam Husayn, it is the "greatest honor" for the people of Iran to having "chosen your way" as "your Shi'ah."¹²⁰ And, it is for this reason that prayer leaders repeatedly urged those who are versed in the events of the 'Ashura' to make their accounts of the tragedy relevant to the present; to "select slogans that are proportional to the state of our living and revolutionary society."¹²¹ In a word, if they would inform the people of Imam Husayn's way, making it relevant to the present; if they would guard the spirit of Husayn and see to it that the people maintain their connection with Husayn, all "self-interested motives" would disappear from the minds of all individuals.¹²² Imam Husayn's way and struggle would therefore remain ever-present.

The martyr soul, A. Toynbee wrote, "is the soul which goes to martyrdom...to satisfy a craving of the soul itself for deliverance from the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world."¹²³ Imam Husayn too, pursued martyrdom for this reason, as he himself is said to have proclaimed, "I see life under tyrannic government to be tiring and unacceptable and I consider it happiness and pleasure to leave this world."¹²⁴ Indeed, the goal

of martyrdom is and has been to put an end to the hardships of worldly life and to achieve eternal bliss in paradise. Nevertheless, the exemplary models which are offered in the reinterpreted myth of Husayn include an additional goal of the seeker of martyrdom: through death, he renders practical service and furthers the cause of society; he enables his fellow men to live a better life on earth. Self-interests and selfishness have thus given way to altruism and to efforts to improve humanity through premature death.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. Ittila'at, March 16, 1985.
2. Emmanuel Sivan, Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986), p. 192. [In Hebrew, hereafter, Sivan.] (The Hebrew version of the book contains a chapter on the ideology and the symbols of the Islamic Revolution that does not appear in the English version published in 1985 by Yale University Press.)
3. Fischer, Iran, p. 175.
4. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, p. 15 .
5. On Imam Husayn's motivations and martyrdom as described in Shi'i sources, see Ayoub, pp. 93-136.
6. Ajami, p. 141.
7. Algar, "Oppositional Role," p. 233.
8. Ayoub, pp. 118-119.
9. Ibid., p. 41.
10. Lewis, "The Shi'a," p. 29.
11. W. Bjorkman, "Shahid," The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st edition.
12. Ibid.
13. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, p. 23.
14. On the development, structure and subject-matter of the ta'aziyah, see Peter Chelkowski (ed.), Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran (New York: New York University Press, 1979); Peter Chelkowski, "Dramatic and Literary Aspects of Ta'zieh-Khani -- Iranian Passion Play," Review of National Literatures, Vol. 2 (Spring, 1971), pp. 121-137; William Beeman, "A Full Arena: The Development and Meaning of Popular Performances in Iran," in E. Bonine & N. Keddie (eds.), Modern Iran: The Dialectics of Continuity and Change (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), pp. 361-381; Thaiss, pp. 352-358; and

Ayoub, pp. 151-158, 251-253.

15. Ayoub, p. 151.

16. Ibid., p. 92.

17. Mary Hegland, "Two Images of Husain: Accommodation and Revolution in an Iranian Village," in Keddie (ed.), Religion and Politics in Iran, pp. 221-222 [hereafter, Hegland].

18. Arjomand, The Shadow of God, p. 164.

19. Ibid. p. 241. Likewise, Enayat observes that "...the ta'ziyah was promoted by the financial and political oligarchs who used it under both Safavid and Qajar dynasties as a means of consolidating their hold over the populace...." See, Enayat, Modern Islamic Political Thought, p. 184.

20. Enayat, Modern Islamic Political Thought, p. 194.

21. Ibid., p. 191.

22. "The Immortal Martyr" was republished by the Islamic regime, albeit without Montazeri's introductory chapter. See, Salihi Najaf-Abadi, Shahid-i Javid, Husayn ibn 'Ali (Tehran: 1982).

23. Thaiss, p. 358. [Emphasis in the original.]

24. Sivan, p. 206.

25. David Menashri, Iran in Revolution (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1988), p. 47. [In Hebrew.]

26. Peter Chelkowski, "Stamps of Blood," The American Philatelist (June, 1987), p. 560.

27. Fischer, Iran, p. 13.

28. Chelkowski, "In Ritual and Revolution," p. 8.

29. Algar, "Oppositional Role," pp. 233-234. Also see, Ann K. S. Lambton, "Secret Societies and the Persian Revolution of 1905-1906," St. Anthony's Papers, Vol. 4 (1958), p. 55.

30. Algar, Religion and State, p. 252.

31. Arjomand, The Shadow of God, p. 250.
32. Algar, Religion and State, p. 252.
33. Cited in Thaiss, pp. 359-360 [emphasis in the original].
34. Hegland, p. 226.
35. Fischer, Iran, p. 25.
36. Hegland, pp. 227-228 [emphasis in the original].
37. Khomeini, Islam and Revolution, p. 242.
38. Ibid., p. 243.
39. Fischer, Iran, p. 183.
40. Cited in Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 522.
41. Fischer, Iran, p. 183.
42. November 14, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 385-389.
43. November 30, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, p. 157.
44. Menashri, Iran, p. 5.
45. September 7, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 45-48. For similar expressions, see Taleqani, July 27, 1979, ibid., pp. 6-7; Montazeri, ibid., p. 53; Khameneh'i, April 25, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 125; Khameneh'i, April 25, 1980, ibid., p. 125; and Khameneh'i, September 5, 1980, ibid., p. 293. Taleqani's firsthand views on shahadat (as well as of other Iranian thinkers of the revolution) are found in Mehdi Abedi and Gary Legenhausen (eds.), Jihad and Shahadat. Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam: Essays and Addresses by Ayatullah Mahmud Taleqani, Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari, Dr. Ali Shari'ati, forward by Mahmud Ayoub (Houston: The Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986).
46. Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 53-54. In like manner, when the Iraqi regime executed Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, the most respected Iraqi Shi'i 'alim, in April 1980,

Khameneh'i claimed that he "drank the elixir of martyrdom (sharbat-i shahadat)," and therefore "we are not sorrowful." And, Khameneh'i concluded "We take pride in shahadat; we are not grieved": April 25, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 125.

47. March 21, ibid., p. 79-80.

48. Menashri, Iran, p. 89.

49. See, for instance, Montazeri, October 12, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, p. 96; Montazeri, October 19, ibid., pp. 99-100; and Montazeri, November 23, 1979, ibid., pp. 153-154.

50. May 9, 1980, ibid., pp. 144-145.

51. May 16, 1980, ibid., pp. 151-152.

52. See Montazeri, December 7, 1979, ibid., pp. 170-171; Khameneh'i, January 25, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 17; and Khameneh'i, August 29, 1980. ibid., pp. 286-288.

53. See, Khameneh'i, May 9, 1980, ibid., p. 145; and Khameneh'i, March 20, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 137-138.

54. Marvin Zonis and Daniel Brumberg, "Shi'ism as Interpreted by Khomeini: An Ideology of Revolutionary violence," in M. Kramer (ed.), Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution, p. 55 [hereafter, Shi'ism].

55. See, Khameneh'i, October 3, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 333; Khameneh'i, October 17, 1980, ibid., pp. 346-347; Khameneh'i, October 31, 1980, ibid., pp. 267-268; Khameneh'i, December 12, 1980, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 20; Hojjat al-Islam Faqr, before sermon, Ittila'at, February 5, 1983; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, April 23, 1983.

56. September 26, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 318-319.

57. September 4, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 390.

58. Ittila'at, April 23, 1983. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, October 17, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 351.

59. Ibid., p. 352. Also see, Khameneh'i, January 9, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 52-53; Rafsanjani, April 9, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 346; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, April 23, 1983.

60. September 18, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 413.
61. Rafsanjani, April 9, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4 p. 346.
62. August 14, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 354. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, October 17, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 351-352.
63. Khameneh'i, January 9, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 52-54.
64. Khameneh'i, October 3, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 329-330.
65. Khameneh'i, October 17, 1980, ibid., p. 368. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, December 12, 1980, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 20; Khameneh'i, January 9, 1981, ibid., pp. 52-54; Khameneh'i, January 16, 1981, ibid., pp. 63-64.
66. October 10, 1980, ibid., pp. 360-361. Also see, Khameneh'i, May 1, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 195.
67. Chelkowski, "Stamps of Blood," p. 562.
68. Menashri, Iran in Revolution, p. 237.
69. October 31, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, 1980, p. 373.
70. November 7, 1980, ibid., p. 381.
71. March 20, 1981, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 138-140.
72. Ittila'at, November 16, 1985. For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, March 15, 1986; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, March 29, 1986; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, May 17, 1986.
73. Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani, Ittila'at, July 23, 1983; For similar remarks, see Falsafi, before sermon, Ittila'at, April 20, 1985; "Brother" Afshar (of the Revolutionary Guards), before sermon, Ittila'at, February 1, 1986. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, March 15, 1986; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, March 29, 1986; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, May 17, 1986; and Hojjat al-Islam Masbah Yazdi, before sermon, Ittila'at, January 31, 1987.
74. See, for instance, Ardebili, Ittila'at, January 4, 1986; Khameneh'i, Kayhan, March 29, 1986; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, January 17, 1987; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at,

February 7, 1987; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, April 4, 1987. On the symbolic meaning of operations "Karbala", see Majid Khadduri, The Gulf War: The Origins and Implications of the Iran-Iraq Conflict (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 112.

75. See, for instance, Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, November 16, 1985; Ardebili, Ittila'at, January 4, 1986; Afsahr, before sermon, Ittila'at, February 1, 1986; and Khameneh'i, Kayhan, March 29, 1986.

76. See, for instance, Khameneh'i, September 26, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 315; Khameneh'i, October 3, 1980, ibid., p. 328; Khameneh'i November 21, 1980, ibid., p. 396; Khameneh'i, January 23, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 71; and Kashani, October 30, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 72.

77. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, July 23, 1983.

78. Ittila'at, September 6, 1986.

79. Rafsanjani, October 30, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 72.

80. April 3, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, 1981.

81. Ittila'at, June 15, 1985.

82. October 30, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 69-74.

83. Ibid., p. 72.

84. November 14, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 386.

85. Menashri, Iran, p. 15.

86. Khameneh'i, June 5, 1981, ibid., p. 237.

87. Rafsanjani, May 28, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 453.

88. Ibid., p. 455. For similar expressions, see Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, April 4, 1987.

89. November 21, 1980, ibid., pp. 395-396.

90. Ittila'at, April 20, 1985. For similar remarks, see Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, June 15, 1985; and Imami-Kasahni, Ittila'at, September 20, 1986.

91. Menashri, Iran, p. 392.

92. Ibid., p. 184. Also see, Bakhash, The Reign of the Ayatollahs, pp. 219-220.
93. See, for instance, Rafsanjani, September 4, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 395; Rafsanjani, September 11, 1981, ibid., p. 405; Rafsanjani, Kayhan, June 26, 1982; Mir-Husayn Musavi, before sermon, Ittila'at, August 25, 1984; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, July 13, 1985.
94. August 7, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, 335, and August 21, 1981, ibid., p. 366, respectively.
95. The Saudis denied that they fired and maintained "that all the 400 Iranian pilgrims were killed in the stampede that followed police intervention." See, Shireen T. Hunter, Iran and the World: Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 119 [hereafter, Hunter].
96. For the ideological context of Iranian-Saudi rivalry, see chapter seven.
97. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, August 29, 1987, and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, September 5, 1987, respectively.
98. Ittila'at, August 15, 1987.
99. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, September 5, 1987.
100. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, August 22, 1987.
101. Khameneh'i, November 14, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 386.
102. Ittila'at, September 6, 1986. Also see, Rafsanjani, November 6, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, 1981, p. 84.
103. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, August 20, 1988.
104. Rafsanjani, November 6, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 78.
105. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, August 20, 1988.
106. Rafsanjani, October 9, 1981, ibid., p. 36. Also see, Yazdi, Ittila'at, October 8, 1983.
107. Rafsanjani, November 6, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 82.

108. Rafsanjani, December 18, 1981, ibid., p. 144.
109. Ibid., pp. 145-146.
110. Ibid., p. 147.
111. See, Rafsanjani, November 6, 1981, ibid., pp. 81-84.
112. Ittila'at, september 21, 1985.
113. Hegland, p. 226.
114. Khameneh'i, November 14, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 376. Also see, Falsafi, before sermon, Ittila'at, February 4, 1984; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, October 13, 1984.
115. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, October 8, 1983. Also see, Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, September 29, 1984; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, October 13, 1984; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, August 5, 1989.
116. Rafsanjani, November 6, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 80-81.
117. Khameneh'i, November 14, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 388.
118. May 28, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 452.
119. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, October 13, 1984. Also see, Imami-Kasahni, Ittila'at, September 20, 1986; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, August 29, 1987.
120. October 9, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 36. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, June 5, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 237.
121. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, September 29, 1984.
122. Khameneh'i, November 14, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 389.
123. Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, abridgement of Vol. I-VI by D. C. Somervell (tenth edition; New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 442.
124. Thaiss, P. 352.

Chapter V:
THE "GOVERNMENT MYTH" OF EARLY ISLAM:
THE LEGITIMIZATION OF THE
ISLAMIC REGIME CAMPAIGN

A. Introduction

In January 1988, Rafsanjani delivered a lengthy sermon in which he discussed a "very important message" previously issued by the "leader," Ayatollah Khomeini. The message, as expounded by Rafsanjani, was a reiteration of Khomeini's well-known views on the nature and function of Islamic Government and, specifically, on the duties and privileges of the 'ulama' as the political leaders of the Muslim community. The gist of the sermon was that "it is the fuqahah who determine the Muslims' way of life under every condition and at any given time." In a world where "people extract economic minerals from the depth of the earth," where "a war is waged for the conquest of space and Mars," and where "atom [bombs] are built...as weapons of intimidation," the Qur'an cannot provide answers to all

problems and issues. Indeed, Rafsanjani claimed, if "in the present age we are confronted with a million issues," only "one hundred thousand of these have been relevant at the time of the Prophet." Thus the faqih is duty-bound to reign over the Muslim community and provide solutions to all issues and problems that were unknown to seventh-century Arabia.¹

The notion of an Islamic government headed by the 'ulama' was not an abstract idea in the political experience of Iran at the time of Rafsanjani's sermon. By that time (1988) the Iranian people have already been under direct clerical rule for nearly a decade. It was, however, considered an original, innovative notion (if not a radical break from the mainstream of Shi'i thought) in 1971, when Khomeini first introduced his views on "Islamic Government" in his famous tract, "The Governance of the Jurist" (Vilayat-i Faqih). And, when immediately after the demise of the monarchical order Khomeini's people took concrete measures to put this notion into practice, the novelty of this enterprise was even more accentuated.

No doubt, Khomeini's call in his Vilayat-i Faqih for the 'ulama' to seize the leadership of the Muslims, to overthrow the "treacherous" monarchy, and to "establish

the lawful Islamic government" (al-hukumah al-Islamiyah al-shar'iyah)²; his forceful attacks on both monarchy and dynastic succession as alien to Islam and, particularly, his assertion that the 'ulama', as the successors of the Prophet and the Imams, must exercise supervision over all the executive, administrative and planning affairs of the country, were "a radical departure from traditional Shi'ah views"³:

There has been little disagreement over the right of jurists to engage in political activity, especially those aimed at redressing injustices or protecting the religious and moral standards of Islam. However, [the]... claim [of exercising direct political authority] extends beyond this to the actual administration of government and institutional control over political process, powers which belong to the 'universal authority' of the Imams.⁴

Khomeini's innovative thought and, after establishing clerical rule, practice, should be viewed against the background of the 'ulama's traditional attitude toward the temporal state. From a pure doctrinal perspective, the Shi'ah hold that to the Imam alone, divinely protected against sin and error, belongs all legitimate rule. Consequently, "with the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, in 874, even the possibility of the legitimate exercise of power disappeared from the world. Hence all states are inalienably usurpatory, even those of

formal Shi'i affiliation."⁵ In practice, however, the Shi'ah have been willing to accord a degree of legitimacy to any state that attempted to govern according to Islam, since the political order of the Imam was viewed as an unattainable ideal in his absence. As Akhavi explains:

To be sure, the government of the Imam is held up as an example to try to approximate, but there is no illusion that the ideal can be realized. In the absence of the Imam, therefore, twelver Shi'ism accepts the existence of a temporal ruler as a necessity for order and prosperity, even if it denies his legitimacy in the ultimate sense.⁶

It is therefore not surprising that upon the removal of the monarchy, the 'ulama' embarked upon an earnest campaign to legitimize the Islamic government they had installed in Iran. Their first concern was to show that their own form of government was a continuation of, rather than a departure from, Islamic tradition. Thus, the leaders of the "new" Iran depicted their political program as a return to the pure and uncontaminated Islam of the first days. And, "The source of inspiration for [their] ideal society was that of the period of the prophet Muhammad (in Medina) and the Imam 'Ali, which was 'the institutional, legal, financial and, of course, religious precedent as near perfection as could be hoped for'."⁷ In other words, the Islamic regime has turned to what I

call the "government myth of early Islam" -- those parts in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth which deal with the paradigmatic statesmanship and the exemplary governments of the Prophet Muhammad and the First Imam\Fourth Caliph 'Ali -- as a means of legitimizing their form of government and policies in the eyes of the masses.

It is true, the 'ulama' have already turned to the very same government myth during the period of struggle against the Shah. For example, Khomeini's writings and declarations before the revolution are replete with references to the days of the Prophet and 'Ali, implying that his own desired Islamic government is to be a reenactment of theirs'. Thus, he pledged, as Menashri puts it, "The Islamic state...would ensure social justice, true democracy, and genuine independence from imperialism"⁸; it will also "return history to its natural course: Islam will return to its glorious past and lead the world and the Shi'ah, in turn, will lead Islam."⁹

However, once in power Khomeini and the followers of the Imam's line were called upon to manage the affairs of the state, and not merely discuss them. A corollary of this was that they were now obliged to respond to the various internal challenges that threatened the very

foundations of the regime. The failure to live up to expectations -- mainly of the mustaz'afin -- for material improvement, the mounting social economic problems, the Iran-Iraq war, and a violent internal opposition, were just a few challenges which required the regime's effective response (see chapter six). The appeals to the mythological heroes of Shi'i Islam were therefore intended, not only to legitimize a form of government, but to justify the regime's policy decisions and shortcomings as well.

This chapter examines how the Islamic regime attempted to reinforce its legitimacy by means of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth. We have already seen (see chapters three and four) how the cosmogonic myth has been utilized for keeping the revolutionary spirit of the masses alive during critical phases of the revolution. This chapter, however, shows how the cosmogonic myth has been mobilized to fulfill a more "positive" role -- that of constructing and sanctifying, rather than discrediting and undermining, a regime.

Section B examines in a historical context the shift in the 'ulama's attitude toward the temporal state in the modern period, culminating in the overthrow of the Shah

and the establishment of an Islamic government in Iran. This is intended to illustrate the Islamic regime's radical departure from traditional Shi'i political doctrine, and, consequently, the reason for its self-legitimization efforts to portray clerical rule as a return to, or a reenactment of, the advent of Islam. Section C will then view the legitimization campaign itself, or, how those parts in the cosmogonic myth which are concerned with the Prophet and the First Imam (the government myth of early Islam) served as a legitimizing device in the hands of the Khomeini regime.

It should be stated from the outset, that chapter six which follows is a logical and natural continuation of the present discussion. Whereas this chapter deals mainly with the official campaign to consolidate the Islamic Revolution (specifically, the form of government, political leadership, and society it has given rise to) by means of the government myth, chapter six examines how the very same myth has been used by the Khomeini regime to legitimize policy decisions and to justify the need to redress deficiencies in society.

B. Islam as a Political Regime:
From a Constitutional Monarchy to an Islamic Republic

With the exception of a few interruptions, Iran had been ruled by a monarchy for nearly twenty five centuries. The better part of Iran's known history, from about 550 B.C., bears testimony to the rise and fall of powerful or less powerful autocratic monarchs.¹⁰ Once Shi'i Islam was proclaimed the official religion of the state by the founder of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Isma'il, in 1501, the Iranian 'ulama' have had ample opportunity to express their views on the newly-founded autocratic monarchy. Indeed, Shi'i political doctrine provided them with the ideological grounds for displaying a stance of opposition to the Safavids. As mentioned, Shi'i political doctrine holds that legitimate rule in Islam was passed from the Prophet to 'Ali, and from 'Ali to his descendant Imams. Since the twelfth in their line had disappeared, all temporal or secular rulers should be viewed as usurpers. This explains why a prominent mujtahid dared to challenge the Safavid Shah 'Abbas, reminding him that in the absence of the Imam he is an "oppressor" reigning over "a borrowed empire."¹¹ Other 'ulama' had also pointed to the Safavid

monarchs' lack of infallibility. Indeed, as Safavid power declined in the seventeenth century, some 'ulama' began to deny the religious legitimacy of the Shahs altogether, and to claim that the mujtahids had a better right to rule. This was a view held by a small minority of 'ulama', however.¹²

The majority of 'ulama' in Safavid time generally chose a more acquiescent position toward the monarchy, as their dependence on the state for positions led them to cooperate with the temporal rulers. Moreover, "The 'ulama' even became vehicles for the allegation that the Safavid monarchs directly descended from the Prophet through Imam Musa al-Kazim."¹³ The 'ulama' thus assented to the claim that the Safavid Shahs shared the charisma of the Imams and consequently to their designation as "The Shadows of God on Earth." The analysis of Jean Chardin, who was in Iran at the time of the coronation of Shah Sulayman (1666), sheds light on the 'ulama's position toward the Safavid sovereigns:

The clergy...consider that rule by laymen was established by force and usurpation, and that civil government belongs by right to the sadr [the head of the religious institution] and to the Church...but the more generally held opinion is that royalty, albeit in the hands of laymen, derives its institution and its authority from God; that the king takes the place of God and the prophets in the government

of the people; the sadr, and all other practitioners of the religious law, should not interfere with the political institution; that their authority is subject to that of the king, even in matters of religion. This latter opinion prevails....¹⁴

Nevertheless, the idea that government belongs to the mujtahids in the period of occultation did gain more ground in the eighteenth century, and particularly in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, under the unpopular Qajars, who never enjoyed the religious aura of the Safavids. The Qajar period should therefore be viewed as a watershed in 'ulama'-state relations. As Keddie observes:

Whether or not the idea that the mujtahids partake in the charisma of the Imams had prior doctrinal justification, and whether or not the idea that temporal governments lack legitimacy had a long history, many of the 'ulama'...came to believe such things in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁵

The resurfacing of such views notwithstanding, the 'ulama' made no demands to assume directly the leadership of the government throughout the Qajar period. Their protest, culminating in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, was characterized by two objectives: one anti-imperialist and the other anti-Qajar. The first resulted from the encroachment of non-Muslim, "infidel" states upon

Muslim territory (Iran), and the second was directed against the government's policy that encroached upon the 'ulama's position, both socioeconomically and politically.¹⁶ On the whole, however, the 'ulama' in the Qajar period constituted no threat to the existing order: "any wish to reshape definitively the norms of political life and the bases of the state was foreign to the 'ulama' in Qajar Iran."¹⁷

As a result of their support for the institution of monarchy on the one hand, and their reservations from the overall policies of the Qajar Shahs on the other, many prominent Iranian 'ulama' inside Iran and in the 'Atabat (the Shi'i Holy cites in Iraq, at Karbala, Kazimayn, and Samarra) joined the ranks of the Constitutional movement which led to the revolution of 1906. This is to say, they largely accepted the necessity of monarchy, but at the same time they recognized the need for a constitution, a national assembly, to supervise the conduct of the monarch.

Some scholars contend that the 'ulama' did not generally have a clear idea of constitutional government and national sovereignty, "because their understanding of the foundations of new political philosophy was

limited."¹⁸ The fact remains, however, that they are usually commended for "the strong and unequivocal stand... in support of the Constitutional movement"¹⁹; and, more important, that at least some grand mujtahids never doubted the basic virtues of legal restraints of the powers of the monarchy. Prominent among the advocates of a constitutional monarchy were the mujtahids resident of Najaf, the most notable of whom was Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Na'ini (d. 1936).

Na'ini represents an outstanding endeavor to reconcile between (constitutional) monarchy and Shi'i Islam -- between "continued awareness of the occultation of the Imam, together with the resultant impossibility of legitimacy, [and] the practical need for a form of government that does not grossly offend the dictates of religion."²⁰ Na'ini is the author of Tanbih al-Ummah va-Tanzih al-Millah ("Warning to the Community and Purification of the Nation") which is regarded as an attempt to legitimize the constitutional order with the methods of religious jurisprudence. An examination of Na'ini's constitutional thought is beyond the purport of this study. Hence, it suffices to note that, on the whole, Na'ini held that two forms of government should be taken into account in the absence of the Imam: the first is

"arbitrary" or "despotic," and the second is "constitutional" or "limited." In the first, the ruler "treats the country and its population as his private property. He considers the people as slaves or animals to serve only his aspirations and passions."²¹ In the second, however, the ruler manages the country under constitutional restrictions which prevent his absolutist and despotic inclinations.²² To ensure that legislation does not run contrary to the laws of Islam, Na'ini proposed that a committee of mujtahids be included in the national assembly to oversee all legislation. (This latter requirement was ratified in the 1907 Constitution in the Supplement to the Fundamental Law.) In short, Na'ini, together with other prominent 'ulama', espoused the creation of a constitutional monarchy, for they considered it the best alternative to the ideal rule of the Imam. The latter will return in the end of time to establish the one and only true Islamic government; meanwhile, the inherent illegitimacy of the monarchy should be reduced to the minimum by means of a Western-type constitution that will limit the usurpatory and despotic nature of the state. The 'ulama' thus continued to view temporal rule as a necessity in the absence of the Imam.

The oppositional and political upheavals during and

after the Constitutional Revolution demonstrated the 'ulama's continuing support for constitutional monarchy. For instance, when Reza Khan embarked upon a republican campaign in 1924, it was mostly the 'ulama' who opposed a republic, largely because they identified it with the anticlerical policies of Turkey's Ataturk, who had established a republic and abolished the caliphate. Pro-monarchy sentiments even led the outspoken clerical opponent of republicanism, Ayatollah Sayyid Hasan Mudarres, to declare "that an attack on the monarchy was an attack on the holy shari'ah."²³ The religious establishment was thus convinced "that monarchy and Islam stood and fell together."²⁴

The 'ulama's response to Reza Shah's policy of comprehensive intrusion upon their prerogatives was generally quite mild.²⁵ The first systematic formulation of a position of the clerical opposition was delayed until 1941, a short time after Reza Shah's abdication. This was Khomeini's first programmatic work, Kashf al-Asrar ("The Revealing of Secrets"). In this book Khomeini attacked secularism and Reza Shah's autocratic rule. He also set forth many of the political ideas he would elaborate thirty years later in his Vilayat-i Faqih. Yet, Khomeini did not in this early book declare monarchy to be by its

nature illegitimate. Nor did he specifically call upon the 'ulama' to assume directly the leadership of the government. On the contrary, he claimed that "bad government is better than no government...the 'ulama' always cooperate with the government if that is needed,"²⁶ and urged the 'ulama' to exercise their constitutional right of overseeing legislation. It may therefore be argued that "Taking it all in all, Khomeini's views [in this period]...were in keeping with the attitudes then current among the mainstream 'ulama'."²⁷ He too held that monarchy encumbered by a constitution was still the best means, in the absence of the Imam, of reducing the illegitimacy of the state to the minimum.

Relations between clergy and state during the greater part of the 1950's had been relatively cordial. This period saw the rise of two prominent mujtahids, namely, the political-oriented Ayatollah Sayyid Abu al-Qasim Kashani (d. 1963) and the sole marja'-i taqlid (source of imitation) of that time, Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Borujerdi (d. 1961). The careers of both individuals are indicative of the 'ulama''s continuing support for the monarchy. In essence, Borujerdi lacked worldly ambitions and, as a staunch quietist, he rejected the 'ulama''s involvement in politics. Accordingly, he maintained

cordial ties with government officials and with the Shah himself.²⁸ Borujerdi's loyalty to the monarchy was best demonstrated during the anti-Baha'i campaign in May-June 1955, when he angrily complained that the Baha'is were "secretly working against the monarchy and the state."²⁹ And, in 1960 Borujerdi was quoted as saying, "I pray day and night for the person of the Shah-in-Shah, for whom I entertain sincere regard."³⁰

This also held for the chief religious politician of the period, Kashani, who, after lending his support to Mosaddeq against the Shah in 1952-53, backed the U.S.-supported royalist coup d'etat of August 1953 which reinstated the Shah in power.³¹ It is noteworthy, that "By 1953 the 'ulama' largely supported the Shah against Mosaddeq."³² Thus the fifties witnessed no major disagreements between the 'ulama' and the regime -- although many, including Borujerdi, pointed to the growing totalitarian trend of the Shah's government toward the end of that period.

The death of Borujerdi and Kashani in the beginning of the 1960's, gave rise to Khomeini as the leading figure in the religious establishment. Khomeini's rise came hand in hand with the consolidation of the Shah's power and with

far-reaching social and political changes which were brought about by the Shah's reform policies, later identified with the "White Revolution." Modernization that was characterized by massive corruption, a widening gap between rich and poor, the identification of the Pahlavis with Western, "infidel" control, and a significant erosion in the prerogatives and social role of the clerical class, were just a few factors that contributed to the growing hostility to the Shah and his regime. Yet, the 'ulama' were still not prepared to proclaim monarchy illegitimate or to claim their own right to rule. In this respect, Akhavi traces four factions among the 'ulama' in the early 1960's: the "radical" faction, led by Khomeini; the "social reformers"; a "conservative" faction; and a faction "that was willing to cooperate with the court." It is clear that as "reformers," the second faction had no pretensions of overthrowing the existing regime. Given the designations of the third and fourth factions, they too, had no aspiration for fundamental change in the political system. Even the so-called "radical" faction, although it advocated strict limitations on one-man rule, did not "seek the violent replacement of the stratification systems of class, status and/or power in Iran."³³

Khomeini's declarations in the early 1960's,

especially during the turbulent period which led to the June 1963 uprising and on the eve of his exile from Iran in November 1964, corroborate the above observation. It is true, his fearless attacks on the monarchy and on the person of the Shah increased significantly, both in frequency and in scope. Hence his denunciations of the "evil intentions" and the "criminal acts" of the "tyrannical regime" and of the "usurpatory and rebellious government."³⁴ Nonetheless, he stopped short of condemning the monarchical form of government altogether. Algar writes, for example, that in 1963 Khomeini "is related on one occasion to have taken a copy of the Qur'an in one hand, and of the constitution in the other, and accused the Shah of violating his oath to defend Islam and the constitution."³⁵ In other words, Khomeini did not call for the overthrow of the monarchy. Nor did he suggest an alternative form of government. He simply implied that the constitution of 1907, if not violated, is still the only means of according the monarchy at least some degree of legitimacy in the absence of the Imam.

By violating the 1907 constitution, Khomeini meant the de facto abolition by the Shah of the Supplement to the Fundamental Law which empowered the 'ulama' to supervise over legislation. By suppressing that constitutional

provision, Khomeini complained, the Shah has in effect allowed the enactment of laws that are contrary to Islam. Consider his following words, in reaction to the parliament's approval of the famous bill granting capitulatory rights to the United States in October 1964:

If the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit the majlis to come to a miserable state like this; they will not permit the majlis to be formed at a bayonet point, with the scandalous results that we see....If the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit some agent of America to carry out these scandalous deeds; they will throw him out of Iran....According to the very text of the law, according to Article 2 of the Supplementary Constitutional Law, no law is valid unless the mujtahids exercise a supervisory role in the majlis. From the beginning of the constitutional period down to the present, has any mujtahid ever exercised supervision?³⁶

In a similar manner, Khomeini declared in April 1964: "We remain in the same trench where we stood before. We oppose all cabinet decrees that are contrary to Islam."³⁷ But this, as mentioned, did not necessarily mean that Khomeini totally withdrew his support for the monarchy. He was simply complaining that by continued violations of the constitution the government was running the risk of undermining the very legitimacy it enjoyed. It is therefore not surprising that Khomeini went on to state: "Do we say the government should go? We say the government should stay. But it should respect the laws of Islam, or

at least the constitution."³⁸

Four years later (1967), Khomeini sent an open letter to Iran's Prime Minister Amir 'Abbas Hoveyda (executed in 1979) from his residence in Najaf. The contents of the letter confirm that his views on monarchy had not changed dramatically by that time. In the letter Khomeini accused the government of treading underfoot the laws of Islam; of selling out the Iranian nation to imperialism for a handful of dollars; of maintaining cordial relations with the arch-enemy of Islam, Israel; of suppressing freedoms and promoting tyranny at home; and, of turning Iran into an backward and a poor country. Khomeini added, however, "While invoking constitutionalism, you have created the worst form of tyrannical and arbitrary government"; the "violation of the constitution is a sign of backwardness". He then asked, "What sin have the 'ulama' committed, apart from offering advice?"³⁹ Khomeini's conclusion was clear: the failed policies and the crimes of the government are a direct result of its infringement upon the constitution -- upon the very same provision that empowered the 'ulama' to see to it that the government won't stray from the straight path. Khomeini was thus advocating the endorsement of the constitution in letter and in spirit, not the overthrow of the existing regime or

the establishment, instead, of a different form of government.

Nonetheless, during his period of exile, particularly after 1970, Khomeini's ideas underwent a sharp transformation. He began to direct his attacks at the institution of monarchy and to call, not only for the adherence to Islamic law and the constitution, but also for the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of an Islamic government by means of revolutionary activity. How can one explain this profound change in Khomeini's political thought between the 1940's and the 1970's? Whatever reasons one may cite, it seems that the underlying reason for this change was the realities in Iran as they emerged as a result of the Shah's "White Revolution" in the 1960's. I have already mentioned some of the concomitant effects of the Shah's policy which intensified clerical hostility toward the state, such as the growing autocratic tendencies of the regime, the corruption, the widening gaps in society, the strengthening of Western, "infidel" control in the country, and the diminishing social role of the 'ulama'. However, of perhaps greater concern to Khomeini arising from the Shah's policy was the increasing emphasis of the state on the secularization of society. As Beeman

observes,

There seemed to be a clear attempt by the Pahlavi dynasty somehow to circumvent Islam in the definition of the Iranian state. The self-coronation of the Shah and the elaborate 2,500-anniversary celebration of the Iranian monarchy in 1969 and 1972, respectively, both adopted pre-Islamic themes. The predominance of symbols referring to Iran's civilizational glories under the Achaemenian and Sassanian Empires were to be seen everywhere in the years immediately preceding the revolution [of 1978-79]....[In 1976] the Shah announced a change in the official Iranian calendar. The year would henceforth be reckoned, not according to the hijrah of Muhammad, but rather to the supposed date of the establishment of the Achaemenian dynasty....[T]he seeming pre-Islamic orientation of the state was viewed by the clergy as yet another attempt by the throne to undermine religious institutions and morality.⁴⁰

Khomeini thus rendered the relative legitimacy he had once granted the monarchy null and void. No longer did he view monarchy as a compatible form of government in Islam in the absence of the Imam, even if it were to be restricted by a Western-type constitution. For even the constitution, as the Iranian experience has shown, was unable to induce the regime to "do good and avoid evil." On the contrary, the despotic nature of the regime precluded any effort to enforce the constitution and consequently the Shari'ah. Hereafter, the institution of monarchy, with its hereditary succession and court ceremonial, was, according to Khomeini, un-Islamic in its

very nature, a total deviation from true Islam (as it existed in the age of the Prophet and the First Imam 'Ali). As Khomeini put it in the Vilayat-i Faqih:

The form of government of the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids, and the political and administrative policies they pursued, were anti-Islamic. The form of government was thoroughly perverted by being transformed into a monarchy, like those of the kings of Iran, the emperors of Rome, and the pharaohs of Egypt. For the most part, this non-Islamic form of government has persisted to the present day, as we can see.⁴¹

Or, in other words,

Islam proclaims monarchy and hereditary succession wrong and invalid. When Islam first appeared in Iran, the Byzantine Empire, Egypt, and the Yemen, the entire institution of monarchy was abolished....Monarchy and hereditary succession represent the same sinister, evil system of government that prompted the Lord of the Martyrs [Imam Husayn]...to rise up in revolt and seek martyrdom in an effort to prevent its establishment....Islam, then, does not recognize monarchy and hereditary succession; they have no place in Islam.⁴²

Thus, Khomeini claimed, the transformation of government into monarchy at the hands of the Umayyads (through the usurpation of rule from 'Ali) was "The greatest disaster that befell Islam," a disaster "even worse than the tragedy of Karbala and the misfortunes that befell the Lord of the Martyrs."⁴³ Moreover, he stated, "the Prophet...said that the title of Kings of Kings, which is borne by the monarchs of Iran, is the most hated

of all titles in the sight of God."⁴⁴ And, most important, "Islam is fundamentally opposed to the whole notion of monarchy."⁴⁵ In this respect, Khomeini now viewed the constitution and the Supplement to the Fundamental Law, which he considered for long as the best means of according legitimacy to the temporal government, as an anti-Islamic imperialist plot:

It is sometimes insinuated that the injunctions of Islam are defective, and said that the laws of judicial procedure, for example, are not all that they should be. In keeping with this insinuation and propaganda, agents of Britain were instructed by their masters to take advantage of the idea of constitutionalism in order to deceive the people and conceal the true nature of their political [exploitative] crimes....What connection do all the various articles of the Constitution, as well as the body of Supplementary Law....have with Islam? They are all opposed to Islam; they violate the system of government and the laws of Islam⁴⁶

In a word, monarchy, according to Khomeini, has become a government of the taghut; a despotic and oppressive government that "eradicates Islam in the name of religion and in the name of the Apostle" (yamitun al-Islam bi-ism al-din wa-bi-ism al-rusul).⁴⁷

Khomeini's uncompromising objection to monarchy continued through the revolutionary year of 1978. He claimed that the Shah and his father had established their rule at the bayonet point, and condemned those who

advocated a return to constitutional rule that allowed the retainment of the monarchy. "Any arrangement that permitted the preservation of the Pahlavis or the monarchy, he said, 'is treason to Islam and the nation'." ⁴⁸

Khomeini's governmental alternative to monarchy was an "Islamic Government" (hukumat-i Islami), as it existed at the dawn of Islam -- in the days of the Prophet Muhammad and the First Imam 'Ali. This was in effect an integral part of Khomeini's underlying conviction that the root cause of all the ills of Iranian society (and, indeed, of Muslim society as a whole) was their abandonment of Islam. He therefore suggested that a return to the "true" Islam, pure and uncontaminated by foreign influences, would, ipso facto, provide the remedy for all these ills. Return to Islam, according to this line of reasoning, also meant a return to the "ideal" form of government that existed in the first age of the community of believers, after it had been abandoned by all Muslim rulers who came after 'Ali. And, "the realization of this ideal would...bring about social justice and a democratic way of life, and would guarantee Iran's freedom from imperialist subjugation." ⁴⁹ In other words, it will return history to its natural course, to the golden age of Muslim

spiritual and material superiority.

In his Vilayat-i Faqih Khomeini explained the essence of the government he had in mind, contrasting it to monarchy. "Islamic government," he wrote, "is not a form of monarchy, especially not an imperial system."

In that type of government, the rulers are empowered over the property and persons of those they rule and may dispose of them entirely as they wish. Islam has not the slightest connection with this form and method of government. For this reason we find that in Islamic government, unlike monarchical and imperial regimes, there is not the slightest trace of vast palaces, opulent buildings, servants and retainers...and all the other appurtenances of monarchy that consume as much as half of the national budget. You all know how the Prophet lived, the Prophet who was the head of the Islamic state and its ruler....In the time of the Commander of the Faithful...the system of government was corrected [after it had been corrupted by the third Caliph 'Uthman] and a proper form and method of rule were followed. Even though ['Ali] ruled over a vast realm that included Iran, Egypt, Hijaz, and the Yemen...he lived more frugally than the most impoverished of our students.⁵⁰

The intention to reestablish the form of government which existed in the age of the Prophet and 'Ali was reiterated by Khomeini upon his triumphant return to Iran in January 31 1979. "The ideal Islamic regime," he announced, "is the regime that existed in the days of Muhammad...and 'Ali....Indeed, our history has given us information about governments...at the advent of Islam. It has shown us how

governments and rulers operated."⁵¹

Yet, the goal of reestablishing an Islamic government as laid down at the advent of Islam (or, if you will, of reenacting the government myth of the Prophet and the First Imam), did not go uncontested. Indeed, even in the very last stages of the struggle against the Shah, no unanimous agreement concerning the type of government preferred in Iran existed among the senior Iranian Ayatollahs. For instance, the moderate Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Kazem Shari'atmadari (d. 1986), who was second to Khomeyni in the religious hierarchy, maintained that "an Islamic government in the present age is an Utopia."⁵² Although he was quoted as saying that "the people aspire to overthrow the autocratic and colonial regime [of the Shah]...and establish an Islamic government,"⁵³ it is clear that his ultimate goal was much different. "Our object," he repeatedly argued in this period, "is to establish a free country, where men and women are freeThe struggle, therefore, is for the practical enforcement of the Iranian constitution [of 1907]."⁵⁴ Thus Shari'atmadari remained loyal to the traditional political outlook of the 'ulama' earlier in twentieth century, who maintained that a constitutional monarchy, which restricts the autocratic tendencies of the king, is

the desirable form of government so long as the Imam is in occultation; "In taking this position, he appeared to be aligning himself with the constitutionalist views of Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Na'ini."⁵⁵ Nonetheless, Shari'atmadari's greater moderation on this issue would make no difference. For in the aftermath of the Shah's overthrow Khomeini's views prevailed: an Islamic government, in the mold of the Prophet and 'Ali, had been declared on the ruins of the monarchy.

C. The Divinely Ordained Government:
Toward the Realization of the Prophetic Mission

Khomeini's first major step to institutionalize clerical rule after the demise of the ancien regime, was the formal abrogation of the monarchy by a referendum held on March 30 and 31, 1979. In the referendum the people were asked to approve a single proposal, laid down by Khomeini himself, to replace the monarchy with an Islamic Republic.⁵⁶ On April 1, following the counting of the votes, Khomeini proclaimed the establishment of an Islamic Republic, and stated: "The Satan [monarchy] is buried; this is the first day of God's government."⁵⁷ No one

could claim any longer, as Bayne had in 1968, that the political development of Iranians has not reached the point where they were able to remain loyal to the state without a symbol in the image of the monarch.⁵⁸ That they were unable to maintain their loyalty to the state without a symbol in the image of the 'ulama', remained to be seen, however. For, as mentioned, it was only in the beginning of the 1970's that Khomeini put forth the idea that Islam was fundamentally opposed to monarchy and, more significantly, that the 'ulama' should rule directly. And, when this idea was put into practice in the end of the decade, it was by all means alien to the political experience of Iran.

Top in the Islamic regime's list of priorities was therefore an aggressive campaign to legitimize clerical rule in the eyes of the masses. To render the proposed form of government a more familiar cultural aura, the ideology of the revolution has already depicted it as a return to the period of the advent of Islam, rather than an innovation (bid'ah), a departure from Islamic tradition and culture. Once in power, the Islamic regime harnessed the same means to their self-legitimization campaign, presenting the government they were now heading as a revival, a reenactment of the form of government that

existed in the dawn of Islam, particularly in the age of the Prophet and the First Imam. In other words, the clerical regime resorted to the government myth of early Islam in order to make their government a more accepted political entity.

It is perfectly understandable why a regime, and in our case, why the Islamic regime in Iran, should make use of myths to advance its own legitimacy. I have shown in chapters three and four how the myths of the Imams have been instrumental in discrediting political institutions and organizations and diverse opponents of the Islamic regime. But myths also fulfill the opposite function, that of establishing the claim of a certain group to political hegemony. In this respect, I have already indicated in chapter two how myths can endow a regime with a degree of legitimacy. I argued that if a myth is believable, man considers himself the end product of a mythical history, or, to use Eliade's terminology, of a "sacred event" that took place in "primordial time." Now, the activity which put this event into order is taken to be exemplary and a paradigm for how things should be done ever after, for it is the activity of "Supernatural Beings." However, as things recede in time from their origin, they lose their strength, decay and eventually die. The only way to

restore them is, therefore, to reenact the event, by repeating the activity which had brought it into being in the first place. Hence, whatever was achieved in the mythological past is not forever lost; it may be restored and regenerated. In short, mythical time is reversible.

A regime may therefore seek legitimacy by portraying its constituent parts -- its form of government, institutions, leadership, etc. -- as a reenactment of a "sacred event" of "primordial time." In other words, by claiming to be a repetition of a "sacred event" brought about by "Supernatural Beings," thus possessing the vitality and efficacy of "primordial time," a regime may render itself as exemplary and, consequently, as worthy of emulation and perpetuation." This is precisely why I shared Fredrich's and Brzezinski's assertion (see chapter two), that myths are (also) employed for "reinforcing the authority of those who are wielding power in a particular community."⁵⁹

The discussion below will show how the government myth of early Islam served to legitimize clerical rule along the lines cited above. As will be seen, prayer leaders have made it more than implicit in their orations, that the Iranian regime has successfully reenacted the ideal

government, leadership and society ("sacred event") brought about by the Prophet and 'Ali ("Supernatural Beings") at the advent of Islam ("primordial time"), after that "event" had fallen into oblivion in the duration of time. It is noteworthy, that, in a sense, the Islamic regime's proclaimed goal of returning to the "pure and uncontaminated Islam," to the first period of the community of believers, implies just that. As noted, Khomeini viewed "true" Islamic government and "true" Islamic society in the advent of Islam as later being "perverted" by the introduction of monarchy in the Umayyad and 'Abbasid periods. This may be interpreted as a natural decline and expiration of a "sacred event" as time goes by, and the need to bring that event back to life by reenacting it.

As a starting point, I will discuss a sermon delivered by Taleqani immediately after the reinstitution of the Friday prayers in Iran, dedicated to what may be termed as the making of a "sacred event" (government) by a "Supernatural Being" (the Prophet) in "primordial time" (the dawn of Islam), and the consequent decline and fall of the event in due time. Taleqani spoke of the outcome of the Prophet's "Islamic Revolution," namely, the establishment of an ideal Islamic government in Medina

after the conquest of Mecca. It was, according to Taleqani, an ideal government because of its just policy as outlined by the Prophet himself. As of this moment, the Prophet allegedly announced, "Every vainglory (iftikhari) of the jahiliyah is trampled under my foot, every profit of the jahiliyah is trampled under my foot, and every distinction (imtiyazi) is trampled under my foot -- all have been obliterated." And the Prophet added, there are to be "no distinctions [between] an Arab and a Persian ('Ajami), a Persian and an Arab, white and black...the most dear to you are not mundane distinctions," but taqva. This ideal state of affairs, Taleqani suggested, remained as long as the Prophet headed the Muslim community. However, "Time passed, the Prophet of God passed away, and gradually the same persons who carried the sign of the tulaga' ["the released," the infidel ancestors of the Umayyads who were released by the Prophet after the conquest of Mecca] on the foreheads attained influence in the [court] of the caliphate." And, upon seizing power they literally returned government to the state of jahiliyah, to the system of distinctions, discrimination, exploitation and oppression.⁶⁰ In other words, the exemplary and paradigmatic "sacred event," the Prophet's government and society, has lost its strength and efficacy as time passed, and subsequently it perished at the hands

of the Umayyads.

When 'Ali assumed the caliphate, other prayer leaders contended, he made earnest efforts to restore the government of the Prophet. His success, however, was short-lived, for he was martyred and his government usurped in the 40th year of the hijrah, just five years after the community swore allegiance to his rule. The "sacred event" was thus doomed, and the "world of Islam suffered its greatest blow. Indeed, without a government Islam was covered with "dark curtains" for fourteen centuries; it has become "an orphan child [who]...has no guardian to manage [his] affairs and protect his possessions."⁶¹

Hence the need to restore the government, to reenact the "sacred event." Islam "is like a house usurped by a usurper; the people of the house want to regain their possession." Throughout the period of usurpation, or as long as the "sacred event" was removed, many "erroneous changes" have been made in the house. Justice has turned into oppression, independence into dependence and submission, equality into discrimination, and tawhid (unity of God) into shirk (polytheism). In short, with the disappearance of the "sacred event" -- the "true" Islamic

government -- the "House of Islam" has been transformed into the house of jahiliyah. It is therefore necessary to rebuild the house immediately by establishing "a government emanating from God and from the people."⁶² Only then, only upon the reenactment of the "sacred event" that took place in "primordial time," will Islamic society regain its past glories and its moral and material superiority.⁶³

And, indeed, the Islamic Revolution was viewed by prayer leaders as a reenactment of the Prophet's "Islamic Revolution." And, because the revolution in seventh century Arabia had given rise to an impeccable and just Islamic government, so did the Islamic Revolution in twentieth century Iran; both revolutions⁶⁴ and their respective goals and achievements were presented as one. Thus, prayer leaders proclaimed that the 22nd of Bahman (February 11), 1979, the day marking the victory of the Islamic Revolution, is "reminiscent of the victory of the Noble Prophet over the infidels and the establishment of an Islamic society in the town of Yathrib [Medina]."⁶⁵

There are, according to prayer leaders, abundant reasons why the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic government in Iran are "reminiscent," a reenactment, of

the Prophet's revolution and government. First, are the circumstances surrounding the victories and achievements of the two revolutions; the fact that "There are similar aspects between what had come to pass on the Noble Prophet and his companions...in the beginning of Islam, and what comes to pass [today] on the nation of that Prophet...."⁶⁶ In a lengthy sermon delivered in December 1981, for instance, Rafsanjani informed his audience of the similarities between Iran's and the Prophet's revolutions. He began by observing that when Iran waged its 1978-79 revolution, the world was divided between the two omnipotent superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. And, he claimed, "In the time of the Prophet, just like today, two superpowers dominated the world: Iran in the East and Byzantine in the West; Iran with its colonies, and Byzantine with its satellites (iqmar)."⁶⁷ Furthermore, Rafsanjani continued, both contemporary Iran and seventh century Arabia were considered parts of the "third world"; both "lagged behind from the standpoint of civilization," and so no one believed that they will be able to become the "barriers" of a new civilization. Neither enemy nor foe expected these revolutions to gain a victory, and they were all proved wrong. Within this context, in both cases the notion of exporting the revolution was first subjected to

"ridicule and mockery" by enemies, who thought that it constitutes "no serious danger to the...exploitative and imperialistic relations of the region." Thus, the two leaders of the revolutions, the Prophet and Khomeini, have been labeled by the "Khosrows and the Reagans of the world" as "sorcerers," "lunatics," and "deluded," only to witness the world overwhelmed by Islam.

This and more, when both revolutions proved to be a serious threat to the old order, enemies took similar measures to thwart off their progress and ultimate victory. In the days of the Prophet, Rafsanjani explained, the Quraysh and the Arab chieftains imposed an economic boycott on the Prophet and the Bani-Hashim. Likewise, the world powers have put Iran under an economic blockade; "the Abu-Jahls, the Abu-Lahabs, the Abu-Sufyans...and their like, have been revealed today in the Carters, the Reagans, the Mitterands...and their like." When this failed, the enemies have tried to use the carrot instead of the stick: they wanted "to buy off the Prophet," offering him economic privileges and material benefits to win him over to their side. The Prophet, however, condemned their deceitful approaches and was unwilling to compromise on the communications of God. In a similar manner, "Until this very day we have not encountered one

instance where the Imam [Khomeini]...has given himself permission to reduce and corrupt [even] the most trivial Islamic injunction for the interests of the day or for compromising with the superpowers."

One may point to other common circumstances surrounding the two revolutions, according to Rafsanjani. There is, for instance, the issue of war refugees. The Iran-Iraq War has brought an influx of Iraqi emigres seeking sanctuary in Iran. This, Rafsanjani claimed, resembles the Muhajirun who, together with the Prophet, found sanctuary with the 'Ansar' of Medina following their plight from Mecca. In this respect, Iran's conduct toward the war refugees is identical to the 'Ansar's conduct toward the companions of the Prophet. Like Iran's Muslim society today, which is doing its utmost to accommodate the helpless refugees, so did the 'Ansar prefer the Prophet's companions "before themselves, though poverty afflict them" (59:9); "There, Abu-Jahl and Abu-Lahb have made [them] homeless. Here, Saddam...[has] made [them] homeless" -- there is no difference.⁶⁷

In the view of other prayer leaders, additional parallels were not lacking. First among them was the staunch support of the downtrodden, of the dispossessed

(mahrumin) and the oppressed (mustaz'afin) classes of society, for the cause of the two revolutions, as opposed to the well-off classes who opposed the revolutions from the outset. Thus, it was the "barefoot people" who were first "to say yes to the Prophet"; it was the "middle classes and the lowest classes of society," those who "had no role in the management of the affairs," who rallied behind the movement of the Prophet -- they were the "truthful helpers" of his revolution. Accordingly, "In our revolution too, you saw and knew from the very first day that...the mustaz'afan of society have been carrying the heavy burden of the revolution on their shoulders."⁶⁸

By contrast, those who "are living in ease and opulence" (mutrafin) opposed the Prophet's mission and undermined his cause; they repeatedly reminded him that, "We are surely disbelievers in what you are sent with" (34:34). They found fault in the loyalty and devotion of the mustaz'afin to the Prophet, rhetorically asking "Shall we believe in you while the meanest follow you?" (26:111). They laid down conditions for joining the Prophet's movement demanding segregation between themselves and the mustaz'afin: "We cannot sit...with them in the mosque; we cannot sit [together] in one assembly; we cannot sit with them in one row." The Prophet, however, paid them no heed

and put his trust in his true adherents, the mustaz'afin. Indeed, his revolution was waged for no other cause, but for the liberation of the mustaz'afin from the claws of oppression. Likewise, "In the present situation of the Muslim community, and in our revolution too, these great wealthy individuals and notables, the owners of the great banks and industries...or the great feudalists and landlords, have not helped the revolution from the outset." Moreover, "they held the Imam and his movement in contempt because they are barefooted." And, because the Islamic Revolution too is a revolution of the oppressed, the government should do the utmost to live up to their expectations for material improvement.⁶⁹

The goals of the two revolutions were also considered identical. Or, as Khameneh'i put it in December 1982,

One important phenomenon in human history is the phenomenon of the prophetic mission, which we today, in the Islamic Republic, claim to be pursuing....There are many parts in [the prophetic mission] that are common to the opinion and the belief of the Islamic Republic.⁷⁰

What, then, are those "parts" in the prophetic mission which are shared by the Islamic Revolution? Prayer leaders usually addressed this question by pointing to a portion of the Qur'anic verse 7:157, according to which the Prophet "removes from them their burden and the shackles

which were upon them." This is to say, they explained, the Prophet was sent by God to remove "These mental, intellectual and dogmatic fetters that the world of shirk and kufr imposed on the thought and meditation of the people"; "to open the chains and the iron collars which were upon the hands and feet of the people." In other words, the Prophet's mission was to obliterate the "regime of classes" (nizam-i tabaqati) and the "vain" (batil) "laws, customs and traditions" that were forced upon the people. In short, the Prophet had a mission to "free the people from all moral and material bondages" introduced in the jahiliyah; to institute justice, freedoms and equality, instead of the prevailing systems of oppression, discrimination and superstition.⁷¹

The same holds, according to prayer leaders, for the goals of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Indeed, the toppling of the monarchical regime, they said, was aimed at the termination of a jahiliyah epoch, with all its above manifestations. In the wake of the Shah's overthrow, however, prayer leaders still contended that the "prophetic mission" has yet to be fully realized in the country. The Shah had gone, Taleqani proclaimed (September 1979), but Iran must continue to stand up against his "imposed culture," "imposed economy," "imposed laws," and

"police limitations." The Iranian people, he said, are still encumbered by the same "burden" and the same "shackles" which the Prophet had resisted. The "shackles" that were imposed on the people by "the treacherous regime of the taghut" still remain; and, if Iran is to follow the way of the Prophet, we should continue "to deliver ourselves and deliver others."²²

However, as time passed prayer leaders were prepared to proclaim the realization of the Prophet's mission. Statements to this effect gathered momentum in the aftermath of president Bani-Sadr's impeachment in mid-1981, as the new regime gained a firmer hold over the country and, consequently, enjoyed a degree of confidence and stability hitherto unexperienced. The Islamic Revolution was therefore depicted as

the answer to the call of the Prophet of fourteen centuries ago, [when] he encountered sedition (fitnah) throughout the world....The Prophetic mission is...a festival [for us]; festival, meaning a return to and a renewal of a great memory. Today our society...has renewed the memory of the beginning of Islam.²³

Accordingly, after the annihilation of the jahiliyah regime, both revolutions established an Islamic government that was founded on revelation (not manmade law) and indebted to justice, freedoms and equality. Thus, it was

stated, the monarchical government was "a hundred eighty degrees at odds with the Prophet of Islam," since it introduced nothing but "abjectness, perplexity, terror and misfortune" in all social affairs. Today's government, however, cannot be compared with the previous regime, because it "takes guidance from the Prophet...in all affairs."⁷⁴ First, like the Prophet, the Islamic government is operating "only on the basis of divine revelation [and]...on the basis of God's inspiration and guidance." The Qur'an said of the Prophet: "Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed" (53:3-4). Likewise, the "propagation" (tabligh) of divine revelation by the Islamic government of Iran is "a must and an obligation."⁷⁵

Moreover, the Islamic government of Iran rendered all "distinctions and discriminations" null and void. All are equal before the law and enjoy total freedoms -- even the non-Muslim communities. Such was also the policy of the Prophet who, upon establishing a government in Medina, proclaimed that no race, family, tribe, or individual in his realm would possess privileges or distinctions over others. Hence, even "Bilal the Ethiopian, a black, weak [man], without a nation or a tribe, was appointed to the exalted position of a muezzin" under the Prophet's

leadership in Medina.⁷⁶ Indeed, Iran's Islamic government and its policies not only resemble those of the Prophet; they are an exact duplicate, a comprehensive reenactment of the Prophet's. Rafsanjani, for instance, told his audience of the impression a foreign national had following a visit to the Iranian majlis: "When [he] entered the Islamic Consultative Assembly, [seeing] the deputies sitting together and eating their simple luncheon, he said...that we [enjoy] the atmosphere of the advent of Islam. Whatever we [saw in]...the mosque of the Prophet, we see today in the Islamic Consultative Assembly."⁷⁷

Three sermons are noteworthy in this respect, since they explicitly proclaimed Iran's Islamic Revolution, Islamic government and Muslim community superior to those of the Prophet. In other words, they implied that Iran's efforts to reenact the government myth of the dawn of Islam produced an achievement that superseded the "sacred event" of the Prophet. It is important to emphasize that all three sermons were delivered during and after 1982, the year which marks a turning point in the consolidation of clerical rule following Bani Sadr's dismissal (June 1981) and the elimination of the opposition (see chapter six). This is to say, the growing stability of the Islamic

regime allowed it to say things which otherwise would have remained unsaid and considered blasphemy.

At any rate, it was Rafsanjani who first claimed during "Unity Week" in January 1982, that the harmony and cooperation among government functionaries and among the different cabinet ministries is unprecedented in history. Indeed, he said, "In past Islamic history...even at the time of the government of the Prophet himself, the administrative cadres who manage the country were not concordant with each other in this fashion."⁷⁸ Likewise, in May 1982 Ayatullah Muhammad Rabbani-Amlashi praised the people's self-sacrifices and struggles in the Iran-Iraq war. Within this context, he quoted Khomeini as saying, "Our people are better than the community of the Apostle." And he added: "Yes, they are better." At the time of the Prophet, he explained, the people often ignored his advice and "raised uproars" when called to join in jihad. By contrast, today practically every family has given shahids "in the way of Islam and the Muslims," but "they don't have the slightest demand from the Islamic Republic." In short, at the advent of Islam only a limited number of people, perhaps only Qasim and 'Ali Akbar, were like the Iranian nation today; ours, he concluded, are the "most beloved nation, they are loved by God, they are God's

chosen, they are the heirs of God on earth."⁷⁹

The third sermon was delivered by Ardebili in June 1989, following Khomeini's death and the appointment by the Council of Experts of Khameneh'i as his successor. Ardebili particularly admired of the swift transfer of power which was achieved without delay or power struggle. The most "sensitive moment" in a revolution, he said, "is the loss of the leader." In principle, he explained, when a leader dies, a revolution "becomes weak," and even "the sympathizers of the revolution...tire themselves out in debates over the distribution of power." For instance, Ardebili continued, "the Islamic revolution" of the Prophet received a mortal blow when the Prophet passed away, as disputes over succession led to the tragedy of Karbala. Moreover, "The day after the departure of the Prophet was called the day of apostasy" (irtidad), or "the day of sedition" (yawm al-fitnah), because, so we are told, "all but three of those who sided with the Prophet apostatized." Such were the disastrous effects of the Prophet's death. The leader of the Islamic Revolution is also gone, said Ardebili. On the day he died "friends became fearful and foes...were filled with hope"; both expected the revolution to wither away. That day "came and went," however. Neither the fear of friends nor the hope

of foes materialized. Indeed, the death of the Khomeini was a great tragedy, but "This revolution has shown that, upon the death of the leader, it has not only survived, but has become more stable." In short, the durability of Iran's Islamic Revolution is greater than the prophet's.⁸⁰

Thus far, I have examined the Islamic regime's attempts to legitimize itself by proclaiming a successful reenactment of the Prophet's part in the government myth. Let's turn now to examine how the the Islamic regime has drawn upon the Imam 'Ali's part in the myth, for the same purposes.

I have indicated above that the Islamic regime viewed 'Ali's bid for the caliphate as a successful, albeit short-lived, attempt to restore the ideal government of the Prophet. Thus, 'Ali's caliphate itself can, in some respects, be regarded as a reenactment of the Prophet's government myth -- of the "sacred event" he had brought about. The Islamic regime, however, has claimed to supersede the government myth of the Prophet. It is therefore not surprising that it also found no fault in claiming that the Islamic Republic is superior to, and is functioning better than, the Islamic state during 'Ali's

Caliphate.

In the first two or three years after the overthrow of the Shah prayer leaders still held Iran's Islamic government to be a reenactment of 'Ali's, not more and not less. They were therefore keen of stating that "This government [of Iran] is a continuation of the government of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib"⁸¹; "Don't...you suppose that by establishing the Islamic Republic and by our revolt against America and all the superpowers...we are reviving the ideal of... 'Ali? Isn't this our assumption?"⁸² Declarations of this type persisted in later years as well.⁸³ Nevertheless, two sermons, both delivered by Rafsanjani after Bani Sadr's dismissal and in the midst of the opposition's crackdown, suggested that 'Ali's government and society are inferior to those of the Islamic Republic. Again, the Islamic regime's newfangled stability gave rise to bold and outright pretensions, hitherto not found in its political rhetoric.

It is true, in the two sermons (the first delivered in July 1981 and the other in July 1982),⁸⁴ Rafsanjani was probably aware that claiming Iran's superiority to 'Ali's government and society might offend the religious-minded audience. He was therefore careful to note in both cases

that "the rank of 'Ali...is more sublime than that of other people," and that "If we and our Imam [Khomeini] were the dust on 'Ali's feet...it would have been a honor for us." He also stressed that 'Ali's society is "the model of the society we live in today." And he summed up his apologetics by noting that what he is about to say should not be viewed as a comparison between Iran's and 'Ali's governments or between Imam 'Ali and Imam Khomeini; my intention, he said, is only "to delineate the situation under which that ['Ali's] government operated."

Nonetheless, in order to substantiate the assessment that Iran's government and society are functioning better than 'Ali's, Rafsanjani began his two sermons by tracing the parallels, and not, as one might expect, the differences, between the two Islamic states. First, he referred to 'Ali's determination to institute justice in his realm by confiscating all "unlawful fiefs." These, in turn, were placed under the control of the treasury and disposed of for the benefit of the people at large. This, Rafsanjani claimed, resembles the Islamic Republic's "Foundation of the Dispossessed" (Bunyard-i Mustaz'afin), which was founded for the same purpose. Second, Rafsanjani pointed to the state-functionaries and governors of the previous Caliph, 'Uthman, whom 'Ali discharged on account

of their corruption and oppressive conduct. When 'Ali wanted to bring them to justice they all escaped and found sanctuary with Mu'awiyah in Syria. This, Rafsanjani said, resembles certain ambassadors employed by the ancien regime who were engaged in corruption for dozens of years. When the Islamic government ordered their return to Tehran to face investigation and punishment, they found asylum in France.

Third, Rafsanjani continued, is the internal opposition 'Ali faced during the Battle of Siffin (657), when the khawarij⁸⁵ stopped the Caliph short of victory upon withdrawing their support for his army. And, he said, this is like the internal opposition the nation is encountering today in the war against Iraq; they too are trying to weaken the country from within and hence cripple Iran's decisive victory. Within this context, Rafsanjani traced one final parallel between 'Ali's caliphate and the Islamic Republic of Iran, namely, the conduct of the leaders in the face of terrorist activities: both 'Ali and the present leaders of Iran have been trying to lead regular lives, although they all ran the risk of being assassinated; they did not allow terrorists to restrict their movement within the country. And, indeed, 'Ali, as well as many of Iran's present leaders, have met a violent

death, precisely because they refused to become the captives of their own assailants.

Having traced all parallels between 'Ali's state and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Rafsanjani then asked the supposedly unexpected question: if the two governments and societies resemble one another, why is it that those of 'Ali had disintegrated, while those of Iran have only strengthened as a result of challenges from within and without?; why "has this government lasted and has become stronger day by day, whereas that government, the government of 'Ali...had fallen?" The key to the answer, Rafsanjani announced in the two examined sermons, lies in "the disposition of the people" in both periods; in the fact that "the people of this time are rightly and justly better than the people whom 'Ali...reigned over." That is,

The stabilizing force of the government of the [Islamic] Republic, the source to the difference between these days and those days, and the [reason] why the government of 'Ali had fallen and why the government of the Islamic Republic has become stronger despite the blows on its head...are the people -- they are the pillars of a powerful government.

Indeed, in those days "the people couldn't endure 'Ali's justice, they couldn't endure 'Ali's decisiveness." On the other hand, today's people are "decisive"; they are "devout," "revolutionary," and above all, they are willing

to endure the government's justice and cooperate with it to the utmost degree: as opposed to the situation in 'Ali's days,

When the Islamic Republic proclaimed its economic [program] and began to carry it out, the unlawful financiers and the wealthy people who remained [in Iran], not to mentioned the lawful [ones], declared their loyalty to the country and were willing to hand over the keys to their factories and proceed to the [war] front. We are not lacking such people.

Thus, the ideal model for all times, the days of the Prophet and 'Ali, has been outdated, as Iran's Islamic regime and Muslim community have laid the foundations to a new, superior "sacred event." And, this contemporary "sacred event" is exemplary and a paradigm for how things should be done ever after, because it too, was brought about by a "Supernatural Being," Ayatollah Khomeini. It is true, article 107 of the 1979 Constitution of the Islamic Republic defined Khomeini's position merely as a "leader" (rahbar), the virtually unlimited constitutional powers of the "leader" as the only legitimate source of spiritual as well as temporal authority, notwithstanding.⁸⁶ Likewise, throughout the first decade of the revolution, prayer leaders have been careful to define Khomeini's position, powers and virtues, precisely as they were outlined in the constitution. They also reiterated Khomeini's well-known

views, as expounded in his Vilayat-i Faqih, on the jurist's right to temporal power. In this respect, they have been particularly fond of making commentaries on the Qur'an and the hadith, also found in the Vilayat-i Faqih, in order to justify Khomeini's temporal authority.⁸⁷ In other words, Khomeini was portrayed as an individual who, although vested with nearly infinite authorities, is nonetheless, a human being.

This was only one side of the coin, however. For, just as the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Government and the Muslim nation of Iran have been rendered a reenactment of the government myth of the Prophet and 'Ali, so did the "leader," Khomeini, has been portrayed as a mythological hero, equal to the "Supernatural Beings" who had brought about the "sacred event" in the dawn of Islam. As Menashri notes,

It must be remembered that [Khomeini] is not only the charismatic leader of the revolution but also the marja'i taqlid (the supreme source of religious authority). As such, his words are considered divinely inspired, and he has frequently been compared to the Caliph 'Ali and sometimes even to the Prophet.⁸⁸

And, as Zonis and Brumberg observe,

There is a strong implication in the principle of vilayat-i faqih that Khomeini's claim to the leadership of the Shi'is is based on divine power, on his having inherited the infallibility and the divinity of the Imams

themselves.⁸⁹

Indeed, to start with, virtually all prayer leaders referred to Khomeini plainly as "Imam," without calling him by name. For instance, when they wished to turn the attention of their audiences to issues that were discussed or ordered by Khomeini, they usually announced that "the Imam said" or the "Imam commanded" (this or that). They also referred to Khomeini as an "Imam-like leader" and praised "the holy presence of the Imam of the nation (Imam-i ummat)."⁹⁰ It is possible that by calling Khomeini "Imam" prayer leaders had in mind the conventional meaning of religious leader or prayer leader. Yet, it seems that, with regards to Khomeini, they have expanded the use of the term beyond its common meaning, to imply that he is of the same rank of the twelve "rightful" Imams, the divinely appointed leaders of the Shi'ah, or perhaps of the last Shi'i Imam who is to return from occultation as the expected messiah. (Fischer informs us that on the eve of Khomeini's return to Iran in 1979, "This waiting for the return of the marja'-i taqlid led to elaborations of similarities between 'Imam' Khomeini and the awaited Twelfth Imam, who will usher an era of justice before final judgment."⁹¹)

At any rate, it seems that the abstention from referring to Khomeini by name was intentional, in order to create an indirect equation between the Shi'i Imams and Khomeini, or, at least, between the decrees of the Imams and those of Khomeini. And, the fact that the title "Imam" belonged exclusively to Khomeini, and hence withheld from his successor to the post of the vilayat, Khameneh'i, supports the impression that only the former was seen as enjoying the infallibility of the Imams. It was precisely for this reason that after Khomeini's death Rafsanjani admitted the title of "the Leader of the Revolution (Rahbar-i Inqilab) to our new leader, Ayatollah Khameneh'i." Nonetheless, he added, there are titles that should be reserved solely to Khomeini; he "must retain in the future and always his distinctive titles." And, Rafsanjani concluded, "One of these titles is 'Imam' or Imam-i Ummat, which we cannot permit our leaders of today or of the future to use."⁹²

Other statements in Friday sermons confirm that Khomeini was seen as "the Imam" or as a "Supernatural Being" who enjoys, among other attributes, the virtues of the Prophet and the Imams. First, prayer leaders have called Khomeini "the 'Ali of our age," "the beloved son of 'Ali," or "the pupil and disciple of 'Ali"; have pointed

to his "decisive, prophet-like leadership," his "prophet-like magnanimity," or his "prophet-like message"; and have applauded his "resolute leadership which our nation has not seen from the Prophet's days to this very day," or the fact that "when he speaks...we feel as though we are listening to the [words of the] Prophet."⁹³

The equation of Khomeini with the Prophet of Islam did not stop there. For instance, obedience and submission to Imam Khomeini were equated in sermons with obedience and submission to the Prophet of Islam. Khameneh'i, for instance, recalled that 'Ali was the symbol of submission (taslim) to the Prophet. "When the Prophet told him 'Stay in Mecca,' he stayed, [and] when the Prophet told him 'Remain in Medina,' he remained." Moreover, when the Prophet "told him 'Go to war and put your life on the line,'" he did just that. And, Khameneh'i added,

Today too, we can perform this duty. The reason why our revolution was victorious is that we have [practiced]...submission; we followed that man whose command to us was the command of God and whose wisdom [is] the wisdom of God....He said, 'Risk your life,' and we did so. He said, 'Sit down in the corner,' we set down. He said 'Proceed with your fists clenched,' we proceeded....[This is] submission to the leader.⁹⁴

Similarly, the swearing of allegiance to Imam Khomeini

and the swearing of allegiance to the Prophet have been viewed by prayer leaders as one. Thus, Khameneh'i cited (July 1980) the Qur'anic verse, "Surely, those who swear allegiance to you [the Prophet] but swear allegiance to Allah; the hand of Allah is above their hands" (48:10). Khameneh'i then added, implying that allegiance to Khomeini means allegiance to the Prophet,

Today the Muslim nation has once again sworn allegiance to their Imam. Just as this verse has come down as an address to the great Prophet of Islam, we are addressing the Imam of the nation: O great Imam! Those people who have once again sworn allegiance to you have sworn allegiance to God. This hand who swore allegiance to the Prophet and to the Imam, is, in effect, swearing allegiance to God.⁹⁵

Within this framework of equations of the Prophet with Khomeini, was the assessment whereby identical trends and circumstances in the lives of the two had led to the revolutions under their separate leadership. For instance, some prayer leaders spoke of the Prophet's and of Khomeini's "emigration" (hijrat) -- the first from Mecca to Medina in 622, and the latter from Iran to Turkey (and later to Iraq) in 1964 -- as the precondition for the subsequent successful "Islamic Revolutions" under their command. Both were banished to live in exile only to return in later years to overthrow the existing order. Indeed, they concluded, a "revolution is not possible"

without a prior "emigration," just as the lifetime careers of the Prophet and Khomeini clearly illustrated.⁹⁶

It is interesting to note that the Prophet's hijrah and his return in later years to initiate a triumphant "Islamic Revolution," not to mention Khomeini's alleged success in reenacting this course of events, largely correspond with Campbell's interpretation of "the myth of the hero."⁹⁷ Campbell traces three common phases which every mythical hero undergoes, namely, "departure," "initiation," and "return." Campbell explains:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.⁹⁸

Indeed, both the Prophet and Khomeini have undergone a similar ordeal: they departed from their "world of common day," and they returned to lead victorious Islamic revolutions and thus "bestow boons" on their respective societies. Khomeini may therefore be viewed as an outstanding reenactment of the Prophet's myth of the hero. It is therefore not surprising that during a sermon in January 1988, the attending crowd shouted the following two slogans:

The Commander in Chief is the leader -- his command is the command of the Prophet

(Farmandah-'i kull-i quvah rahbar ast -- faraman-i u faraman-i Payghambar ast).

The guarantor of unity is the ruler -- his decree is the edict of the Messenger of God (Zamin-i vahdat vali-'i amr ast -- faraman-i u hukm-i Rusul-i Khuda ast).⁹⁹

Also, in their endeavors to equate Khomeini with the Prophet of Islam, prayer leaders never refrained from ranking him alongside with, or immediately after God and the Hidden Imam. Thus, during the Iran-Iraq war it was alleged that "God thanks, the Imam-i 'Asr thanks, [and] our beloved Imam thanks, this nation" for their self-sacrifices.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, on account of the people's support for the government it was said that "You have gladdened the heart of the Imam-i Zaman, you have gladdened the heart of the Prophet, and you have gladdened the heart of the Imam."¹⁰¹ And finally, opposition groups that brought havoc to Iranian towns and provinces were "committing an offense against God, against the Apostle and against the commands of the Imam."¹⁰² In short, despite the implied shirk, prayer leaders have always viewed Khomeini as a constituent member of a "Holy Trinity" of some type or another.

Finally, to be a "Supernatural Being," as Khomeini was clearly perceived, also meant that he enjoys divine

qualities and, as a consequence, the powers to render all difficulties null and void. (This is, in effect, what the great sociologist Max Weber described as "the appearance of a personal saviour, whether wholly divine or a mixture of human and divine; and of the religious relationship to that saviour as the precondition for salvation."¹⁰³)

Thus, Montazeri asserted (December 1979) that the Qur'anic verse "That is the grace of Allah: He gives it to whom He pleases (67:21)," actually refers to Khomeini: God, he explained,

has always given of his grace. Yes, the most exalted grace for the [nation] are the leaders who guide [them] to...happiness....This favor ...[is] the favor of...a leader who is able to guide the nation, who is decisive...and at the same time wise, knows the way, seeks the welfare of the nation, and always has the nation in his mind.¹⁰⁴

In a similar manner, Khameneh'i stated (April 1981) that Khomeini is a "divine phenomenon" and a "divine word," who is able to solve all the nation's difficulties; and he took the verse "Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words" (8:7), as a proof to that. Indeed, he said, "Among [the] divine words is the existence of the Imam of the nation." And he immediately added, "This great man...makes all difficulties easy (asan mikunad). " When the nation is faced with "great difficulties," Khameneh'i concluded, they are soon

"eliminated" through "the measures of the Imam and the decisive conduct of the Imam."¹⁰⁵ In short, few are the people who can "stand up against the environment." Such were "the divine prophets and the Imams." God has granted them "special favors," so they were able "not just to resist the influence of the environment but also to change the environment and deliver the people." And, Imam Khomeini is the most recent recruit to the rank of the Prophets and the Imams; he too, is "the greatest grace of God to the people" and has succeeded in "solving all difficulties in the name of God."¹⁰⁶

We have seen thus far that the Islamic Revolution and Iran's society and leadership have been rendered an inclusive reenactment of, and in some respects, a greater achievement than, the government myth of the dawn of Islam. Let's turn now and view how the Islamic regime has attempted to respond to various challenges and to redress what it regarded as deficiencies in society by claiming to be pursuing the the very same government policies of the Prophet and 'Ali.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Ittila'at, January 16, 1988.
2. Khumayni, al-Hukumah al-Islamiyah, p.103.
3. Bayat, "The Iranian Revolution," p. 39.
4. Gregory Rose, "Velayat-e Faqih and the Recovery of Islamic Identity in the Thought of Ayatollah Khomeini," in N. Keddie (ed.), Religion and Politics in Iran, p. 170. A detailed analysis of the notion of the vilayat-i faqih in Khomeini's thought will not be offered here. Numerous studies have been published on the subject. See, for instance, ibid., pp. 166-188; N. Calder, "Accommodation and Revolution in Imami Shi'i Jurisprudence: Khumaini and the Classical Tradition," Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 18 (January 1982), pp. 1-20; Hamid Enayat, "Khumaini's Concept of the 'Guardianship of the Jurisconsult," in J. Piscatori (ed.), Islam in the Political Process (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 160-180; Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics, 164-166; Yann Richard, "Contemporary Shi'i Thought," in N. Keddie, Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 30-42; and, Bakhsh, The Reign of the Ayatollahs, pp. 38-40.
5. Algar, "Oppositional Role," p. 232.
6. Akhavi, Religion and Politics, p. 13.
7. David Menashri, "Strange Bedfellows: The Khomeini Coalition," The Jerusalem Quarterly, Vol. 12 (Summer, 1979), p. 39 [hereafter, Strange Bedfellows].
8. Menashri, Iran, p. 70.
9. Ibid., p. 5.
10. See, M. R. Benham, Cultural Foundations of Iranian Politics (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1986), pp. 19-20.
11. Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran: A Study of the Role Played by the Persian Residents of Iraq in Iranian Politics (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 61 [hereafter, Hairi].

12. See, Keddle, "The Religious-Radical Alliance," pp. 54-55; and, Keddle, "The 'Ulama's Power," pp. 221-222.

13. Akhavi, Religion and Politics, p. 14.

14. Cited in Roger M. Savory, "The Export of Ithna Ashari Shi'ism: Historical and Ideological Background," in D. Menashri (ed.), The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World, pp. 23-24 [hereafter, The Export of Ithna Ashari Shi'ism].

15. Nikkie R. Keddle, "Religion, Society and Revolution in Modern Iran," in M. E. Bonine & N. R. Keddle (eds.), Modern Iran: The Dialectics of Continuity and Change, p. 26.

16. N. Keddle writes, "Upon a preexistent power conflict between 'Church' and state there was superimposed a Western infidel threat to the power of the religious class in two forms: first, the proposed secularization of institutions traditionally controlled by the 'ulama', and second, the increased control of Iran and its resources by Western governments and their subjects, which might culminate in foreign, infidel rule." See, Keddle, "The 'Ulama's Power," p. 227. Also see, Algar, Religion and State, pp. 131-36, 169-183; Nikkie R. Keddle, The Tobacco Protest; and Azar Tabari, "The Role of the Clergy in Modern Iranian Politics," p. 49.

17. Algar, Religion and State, p. 260.

18. Abdol Karim Lahidji, "Constitutionalism and Clerical Authority," in Arjomand (ed.), Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism, p. 143.

19. Hamid Enayat, Modern Islamic Political Thought, p. 164.

20. Algar, "Oppositional Role," p. 238.

21. Hairi, p. 168.

22. This narrow understanding of constitution as a means of restricting the powers of the autocratic monarch is not unique to Iran in the examined period. Arab thinkers in late nineteenth early twentieth centuries viewed Western constitutions in a similar manner in their quest to "import" constitutionalist forms of governments to their own native lands. For an analysis of Arab views on constitutionalism in the period examined see, Ami Ayalon,

Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: The Evolution of Modern Arabic Political Discourse (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 81-96.

23. Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, p. 58.

24. Ervand Abrahamian, "The Crowd in Iranian Politics, 1905-53," in Haleh Afshar (ed.), Iran: A Revolution in Turmoil (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 136.

25. On 'ulama'-state relations during Reza Shah's period see, Akhavi, Religion and Politics, pp. 25-59.

26. Kashf al-Asrar, as cited in Haleh Afshar, "The Iranian Theocracy," in H. Afshar (ed.), Iran: A Revolution in Turmoil, p. 222.

27. David Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision: Nationalism or World Order," in D. Menashri (ed.), The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World, p. 43 [hereafter, Khomeini's Vision].

28. Leonard Binder, Iran: Political Development in a Changing society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 251; E. A. Bayne, Persian Kingship in Transition (New York: American Universities Field Staff, 1968), p. 48 [hereafter, Bayne]; and, W. M. Floor, "The Revolutionary Character of the 'Ulama: Wishful Thinking or Reality," In Keddie (ed.), Religion and Politics in Iran, p. 76 [hereafter, Floor].

29. Quoted in Akhavi, Religion and Politics, p. 78.

30. Ibid., p. 222 n7.

31. On Kashani see, Yann Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani: Precursor of the Islamic Republic?," in Keddie (ed.), Religion and Politics in Iran, pp. 101-124; and M. Faghfoory, "The Role of the 'Ulama in Twentieth Century Iran. With Particular Reference to Ayatollah Kashani," Ph.D thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1978.

32. Floor, p. 93.

33. Akhavi, Religion and Politics, pp. 100-103. Also see, Floor, pp. 93-94.

34. Khomeini's declarations of April 3, 1963 and June 3,

- 1963, Islam and Revolution, pp. 174-176, 177-180.
35. Algar, "Oppositional Role," p. 245.
36. October 27, 1964, Islam and revolution, pp. 183-188.
37. Bakhash, The Reign of the Ayatollahs, p. 32.
38. Ibid..
39. Islam and Revolution, pp. 189-192.
40. William O. Beeman, "Images of the Great Satan: Representations of the United States in the Iranian Revolution," in Keddie (ed.), Religion and Politics in Iran, pp. 210-211. Also see, Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision," pp. 46-47.
41. Islam and Revolution, pp. 47-48.
42. Ibid., p. 31.
43. A declaration issued on October 31, 1971, ibid., p. 200.
44. Ibid., p. 202.
45. Ibid..
46. "Islamic Government," in Islam and Revolution, pp. 30-31.
47. Khomeini, al-Hukmah al-Islamiyah, p. 122.
48. Bakhash, The Reign of the Ayatollahs, p. 46.
49. Menashri, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 39.
50. Islam and Revolution, p. 57. Also see, ibid., pp. 86-87.
51. Ittala'at, February 6, 1979. For similar expressions by Khomeini see, Ittala'at, January 20, 1979; The Observer, February 4, 1979; and Ittala'at, February 10, 1979.
52. Kayhan International, September 2, 1978.
53. Kayhan International, September 12, 1978.

54. Kayhan International, September 2, 1978. For similar expressions by Shri'atmadari see, The Guardian, May 5, 1978; The Sunday Times, May 21, 1978; The Jerusalem Post, June 26, 1978; Kayhan, February 7, 1979; and Ittala'at, May 21, 1979.
55. Akhavi, Religion and Politics, p. 168.
56. The referendum read, "Are you in favor of an Islamic Republic?" See Menashri, Iran, p. 84.
57. The Washington Post, April 2, 1979.
58. Bayne, p. 75.
59. Fredrich and Brezezinski, p. 99.
60. August 24, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 29-30. Also see, Ardebili, Ittala'at, August 11, 1984.
61. Jannati, before sermon, Ittala'at, June 2, 1984.
62. Khameneh'i, February 15, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 35-37.
63. Khameneh'i, March 21, 1980, ibid., p. 78.
64. Bernard Lewis contends, much like the current leaders of Iran, that "In a sense the advent of Islam was a revolution. The new faith, hot from Arabia, overwhelmed existing doctrines and Churches; its new masters who brought it overthrew an old order and created a new one. In Islam there was to be neither church nor priest, neither orthodoxy nor hierarchy neither kingship nor aristocracy. There were to be no castes or estates to flaw the unity of the believers; no privileges, save the self-evident superiority of those who accept to those who willfully reject the faith." See, Bernard Lewis, Islam in History: Ideas, Men and Events in the Middle East (London: Alcove Press, 1973), p. 237.
65. Khameneh'i, February 6, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 85. Also see, Khameneh'i, June 13, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 183-185; and Khameneh'i, Ittala'at, February 7, 1987.
66. Rafsanjani, December 25, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 155.

67. Ibid., pp. 155-162. For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, March 14, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 67-68; Khameneh'i, February 6, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 85-90; and Falsafi, before sermon, Ittila'at, April 20, 1985.
68. Khameneh'i, June 20, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 195-196. Also see, Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 16, 1983.
69. See, Taleqani, September 7, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 49-50; Khameneh'i, June 20, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 195-196; Khameneh'i, April 17, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 171-172; and Rafsanjani, December 25, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 160-162.
70. Kayhan, December 4, 1982. Also see, Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 20, 1985.
71. See, Taleqani, September 7, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, p. 49; Khameneh'i, May 23, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, 155-157; and Khameneh'i, Kayhan, December 4, 1982.
72. September 7, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 49-50.
73. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 20, 1985. For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, January 1, 1983, Fazel Hrendi, before sermon, Ittila'at, January 8, 1983; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, December 17, 1983.
74. Fazel Harendi, before sermon, Ittila'at, January 8, 1983.
75. Khameneh'i, August 15, 1980, Khutbah, vol. 2, pp. 266-267.
76. Khameneh'i, May 23, 1980, ibid., pp. 155-156. For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, March 7, 1980, ibid., pp. 62-63; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, January 1, 1983.
77. Ittila'at, January 8, 1983.
78. January 8, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 182.
79. May 14, 1982, ibid., pp. 415-416.
80. Ittila'at, June 24, 1989.
81. Rafsanjani, July 24, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 316.
82. Khameneh'i, August 1, 1980, ibid., p. 246. For similar

expressions see, Taleqani, August 24, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 30-32; and Rafsanjani, October 23, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 51.

83. Hojjat al-Islam Dr. Hatemi, for instance, stated in August 1986, that "The government [of Iran] takes pride in being able to follow the Commander of the Faithful....This government is following the Commander of the Faithful." See, Ittila'at, August 23, 1986. For similar expressions see, Jannati, Ittila'at, June 2, 1984; Falasafi, Ittila'at, May 16, 1987; and Ardebili, Ittila'at, May 5, 1988.

84. July 24, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, pp. 318-321; and, Kayhan, July 10, 1982.

85. In the two examined sermons Rafsanjani also termed the khawarij munafiqun ("hypocrites"), which see chapter six.

86. According to Menashri, Khomeini's authority was "a position unparalleled in Iran's earlier constitutional history, but altogether compatible with the Shi'i concept of the marja'-i taqlid." See, Menashri, Iran, p. 116.

87. These references to the authority of Khomeini in the post of the vilayat-i faqih were usually made to counter allegations by the opposition that clerical rule violates the principle of "government by the people" and that it provides for "class rule" and a "new dictatorship." See, for instance, Montazeri, September 14, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 56-60; Montazeri, November 30, 1979, ibid., pp. 158-162; Khameneh'i, June 27, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 207-208; Khameneh'i, March 6, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 120-122; Rafsanjani, October 23, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 51-59; Rafsanjani, November 27, 1981, ibid., pp. 116-117; Rabbani-Amlashi, December 11, 1981, ibid., pp. 136-137; Sane'i, before sermon, Kayhan, December 4, 1982; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, May 21, 1983; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, August 14, 1983; Imami-Kashani, Ittila'at, November 12, 1983; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, November 14, 1987; Jannati, before sermon, Ittila'at, January 16, 1988, Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, February 6, 1988; and Ardebili, Ittila'at, January 21, 1989. The appointment of Khameneh'i to the post of the vilayat-i faqih after Khomeini's death in June 1989, revived references to the the faqih's political authority and his right to rule, for obvious reasons. See, for instance, Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, June 10, 1989; Yazdi, Ittila'at, June 24, 1989; and, Ayatollah Abu al-Qasem Khaz'ali, before sermon, Ittila'at, July 1,

1989.

88. Menashri, Iran, pp. 9-10.

89. Zonis & Brumberg, "Shi'ism," pp. 58-59.

90. See, for instance, Rafsanjani, July 24, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 316; and Rafsanjani, October 9, 1981, ibid., vol. 4, 1981

91. Fischer, Iran, pp. 177-178.

92. Ittila'at, July 1, 1989.

93. See, for instance, Khameneh'i, January 18, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 1; Khameneh'i, May 16, 1980, ibid., pp. 147-149; Imami-Kashani, February 26, ibid., Vol. 4,, p. 269; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, February 12, 1983; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, December 17, 1983; Ayatollah Amini, before sermon, Ittila'at, October 13, 1984; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, March 3, 1984; and Harendi, Ittila'at, January 21, 1989.

94. Khameneh'i, May 30, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 166-167. Also see, Khameneh'i, July 4, 1980, ibid., pp. 212-213.

95. July 4, 1980, ibid., pp. 212-213. Also see, Khameneh'i, September 12, 1980, ibid., p. 301.

96. See, Hojjat al-Islam Mahfuzi, Ittila'at, October 4, 1986; and Khameneh'i, Kayhan, November 6, 1982.

97. Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

98. Ibid., p. 30.

99. Ittila'at, January 16, 1988.

100. Imami-Kashani, March 12, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 292.

101. Rafsanjani, September 25, 1981, ibid., p. 9.

102. Khameneh'i, June 12, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 246-247.

103. Cited in Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium,

p. 51.

104. December 14, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 175-176.

105. April 3, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 153-154.

106. Rafsanjani, October 9, 1981, ibid., vol. 4, p. 36.
For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, March 20, 1981,
ibid., Vol. 3, p. 142.

Chapter VI:
Challenge and Response:
The Divine Politics of the Islamic Government

A. Introduction

The view of prayer leaders as examined in the previous chapter, is that of an Islamic regime that has brilliantly restored, and even improved, the government myth of the dawn of Islam. It was, however, an examination of an ostensible view only, since it was detached from the realities in Iran, and the Islamic regime's response to those realities, as they have taken shape after the overthrow of the Shah's regime.

I have pointed previously to the mounting challenges that threatened the foundations of the Islamic regime during the time span covered in this research. The increasing economic problems, the Iran-Iraq War, a violent internal opposition, ethnic unrest in the provinces, and the growing resentment of the people against the government's shortcomings, were just a few issues the

regime had to attend to. We have seen in chapters three and four how the Islamic regime has attempted to respond to these challenges, mainly, to circumvent popular discontents, by keeping revolutionary zeal at fever pitch. To this end, some parts of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, especially the parts of the Imams and the martyred Imam Husayn, were instrumental.

Yet, another means of subduing social discontent and at the same time of enhancing the legitimacy of clerical rule, was plainly to justify the measures the regime was taking in response to challenges, or to justify the need for such measures. And, to justify the measures of the regime essentially meant one thing: to appeal to other parts of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, especially to the government myth of the Prophet Muhammad and the First Imam 'Ali, in order to show that the regime's conduct was matched, or should be matched, to that of the "Supernatural Beings" at the advent of Islam.

B. Governing in the Mold of 'Ali and Muhammad¹

It seems that the main perceived internal challenge that haunted the Islamic government at least until 1982, were its potential and tangible opponents from within the country; first, the supporters of the ancien regime (the royalists), and later, members of opposition groups, such as the Mujahidin-i Khalq and the Fada'iyān-i Khalq, who soon came to view terrorism and violence as the only means left to express dissent. Bani-Sadr's struggle for power and his subsequent fall in June 1981, have added him and his supporters to the list of the regime's opponents.

The persecution of the Shah's potential supporters and of those identified with his regime, took the form of extensive purges in government ministries and the bureaucracy. This was in effect a part of the "Islamization" process which, beginning in the summer of 1979, has gathered momentum in all spheres of life. The necessity of pursuing the policy of purges, of purifying the branches of government from remnants of the ancien regime, was usually explained in terms of cleansing society of fasad ([moral] corruption) and fitnah (sedition or temptation) -- two Qur'anic terms with negative

connotations that are most familiar to the religious-minded Iranians. And, again, it was up to the Islamic regime to show that their own campaign against fasad and fitnah -- those associated with the toppled government of the Shah -- was also a main concern of the Prophet and 'Ali.

Montazeri, for example, cited the Qur'anic verse "He it is Who raised among the inhabitants of Mecca an Apostle from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them" (62:2). He then went on to say that the Prophet's mission was first and foremost "to purify" the morality of the people, "to salvage them from corrupted moralities (mafasid ikhlaq). Should fasad remain in society, he warned, "the sciences, the arts and progress -- all will be consumed in the way of corruption, in the way of oppression and injustice." Having established this, Montazeri then identified the Persian verb "to purge" (pak kardan) with the Arabic "purifies them" (yuzakkihim) as found in the Qur'an, 62:2. Hence, he observed, our society too should "purify" itself from fasad. And by fasad, Montazeri meant "plotters, spies and traitors in government offices and institutions." Indeed, he concluded, so long as there are "nests of fasad... whatever money we spend" for the construction of the

nation "will come to nothing." The people must therefore "pay attention to their enemies; the mufsadin and the fasidin...[must be] recognized" and treated accordingly.²

Khameneh'i (January 1980) was even more straightforward in the need to dispose of the Shah's supporters, taking 'Ali's proclaimed policies as his line of reasoning. 'Ali said, according to Khameneh'i, shaqqu amwaj al-fitan bi-sufun al-najah, "Break the waves of sedition with the ships of salvation"; 'araju 'an tariq al-munafarah, "Turn back from the path of aversion"; and, most important in this respect, wada'u tijan al-muffakhirah, "Throw down the crowns of vainglories." That is, Khameneh'i explained, the nation of Iran must "break to pieces the monarchy"; it should do the utmost so that the "mini-shah" (Shahak)...will not be; that the successor of that deposed Shah will be rejected." We still long for salvation, he added, "from the filthy rotten regime of the monarchy and from all its traces."³

With the consolidation of clerical rule and the internal struggles which followed the demise of the monarchy, the followers of the Imam's line have gradually been able to oust most of the Shah's sympathizers from

virtually all political power.⁴ Yet, they now had to confront a more formidable opposition, whose members have been willing to resort to violence, most notably, assassinations designed to eliminate key government figures. It is true, after the major crackdown in the fall of 1981 the frequency and scope of opposition activities against the regime declined significantly. Nevertheless, "Although sporadic acts of terrorism persisted, none was as spectacular as the blast at the IRP headquarters in June 1981 or the assassination of the president [Muhammad 'Ali Raja'i] and the prime minister [Muhammad Javad Bahonar] in August 1981."⁵

The regime responded to the opposition adamantly, ruthlessly suppressing street demonstrations, raiding the "safe houses" (khanah-'i timi) of "mini-groups" (guruhak, left-wing organizations), and by mass arrests and executions. And, again, justifications for these ruthless measures were found in the Prophet's and in 'Ali's own conduct toward the internal opposition they had encountered at the advent of Islam. I shall discuss this issue shortly. It is noteworthy, however, that even during the crackdown the regime still suggested that it would be willing to demonstrate compassion and tolerance toward the opposition. Needless to say, vindications for this course

of action were also drawn from the government myth of the Prophet and the First Imam. For instance, Rafsanjani related to his audience (July 1981) the events of the war of Nahrawan (659), when 'Ali nearly annihilated the entire Khawarij sect. Before the war commenced, Rafsanjani said, "ten-thousand, or at least eight-thousand" Kharijis (from a total of about "twelve-thousand") had scattered, fleeing from a certain defeat. The Caliph-Imam allowed them to retreat, saying "Go! Go wherever you want....Go to Kufa, go to Basra." However, "The remaining two-thousand or four-thousand [kharijis]...were killed." Thereupon, Rafsanjani turned to speak of the opposition in contemporary Iran and said:

We are like that [i.e., like 'Ali]; we are not thirsty for your blood. By God, we are saddened to see [how] you are seized and thrown to jail. You are the future of this country...you are the light of our eyes.⁶

In a similar fashion, Rafsanjani referred in May 1982 to 'Ali's conduct toward his own assassin, 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Muljam. During the three days that took him to die, Rafsanjani confirmed, 'Ali showed a remarkable degree of generosity and concern for his assassin. Whenever the dying Imam regained his conscience, he had one question only: "What is Ibn Muljam's condition?" Moreover, when milk was brought to 'Ali, he always took care not to drink

it all saying, "Take this away and give it to Ibn Muljam." In short, Rafsanjani said, "He wanted to make sure that [Ibn Muljam] would not remain hungry or thirsty or without food." Again, having said that, Rafsanjani turned back to contemporary Iran, implying that political prisoners, especially in (the notorious) Evin prison, should be treated in a like manner:

I want our wardens everywhere...to pay heed to these words....We know that they are striving to behave well, but, at any rate, you are the partisans of 'Ali...and today we want to establish the government of 'Ali....'

The Prophet was also regarded as a model of benevolent conduct toward opponents. Islam, Rafsanjani explained (October 1981), considers sin and crime a disease that needs treatment. The treatment, he said, is pursued through "reformation," "spiritual hygiene" (bahdasht-i ruhi), "education," and, only as a last resort, through punishment. Islam, however, will not resort to punishment as long as the first three means of treatment have not been exhausted or proved to be of no avail. For instance, Rafsanjani continued, once an "ill-mannered (bi-adab) Bedouin" approached the Prophet, "treating him with insolence, committing a sin, and provoking the crowd." The people wanted to react violently. The Prophet, however, blocked their way and, through reasoning, gentleness and

kindness, let the offender understand that he was wrong. "The Arab left and, returning the day later, he submitted (taslim shud) and embraced Islam." And, the moral Rafsanjani drew from the story for contemporary Iran ran as follows:

We [too] should behave in such a manner that we would be able to [retain] in society those who are reformable (islah darand) and are amenable to reform. This was one lesson for the companions [of the Prophet, drawn] from one little incident, and this was the custom of Islam.⁸

All in all, however, the Islamic regime let all understand that it intends to crush the opposition on the basis of a "scorched earth" policy. This is so, prayer leaders proclaimed, because the present internal opponents of the regime are equal to their predecessors in the days of the Prophet -- they are formed of the same clay, both are munafiqun. They should therefore be treated precisely as the Prophet commanded -- they are to be annihilated. A brief examination of the group of people termed munafiqun in the dawn of Islam may clarify this point.

The term munafiqun (pl. of munafiq) is directed in the the Qur'an against "those Medinese upon whose fidelity and zeal Muhammad could not absolutely rely."⁹ The meaning of munafiq in the Qur'an is "a waverer" or "a doubter,"

while the conventional translation to "a hypocrite" suits only a few passages.¹⁰ Another portrayal of the same people in the Qur'an is those whom "in their hearts is a disease" (2:9), as opposed to the Muslims who are firm and resolute in their faith. In this respect, Rodinson finds that the term is one borrowed from the language of the Christian Church of Abyssinia, meaning in Ethiopic "doubters or skeptics, those with reservations, men who were in two minds, people of little faith."¹¹

The munafiqun in the Prophet's age were not a homogeneous group: some became enthusiastic adherents of the new religion, only to abandon it later on, some, no doubt, remained pagans, and many more remained skeptical or half-committed to the Prophet's cause. They are therefore depicted in the Qur'an as those who "say with their mouths what is not in their hearts" (3:164). Because of their lack of determination they sometimes join the Prophet and sometimes his enemies -- and all for practical reasons. They disregard all limitations which oblige the true believers, and utter evil remarks about the Prophet and his companions. In short, they are not better, and, in many respects, even worse than the unbelievers, and therefore they will roast in "the lowest stage of the fire" (4:145).

The Islamic regime has been willing to group all the various groups, organizations and individuals opposing the revolution in one category only, regardless of the structural, ideological and other variances between them. In its view, all are munafiqun. Hence, prayer leaders felt free to ascribe to organizations, such as the Mujahidin-i Khalq the title Munafiqun-i Khalq, and style others, such as the Marxist Fada'iyan-i Khalq, the liberal "National Front," the communist Tudeh ("Masses") party, and even the Shah's SAVAK as munafiqun.¹²

One might ask, and rightly so, why the opposition has not been grouped under a different, not less derogatory title, such as kafirun, for instance. The unbelievers had also opposed the mission of the Prophet, and so the contemporary opponents of the Islamic Revolution could just as well be equated with them. It appears, however, that the term munafiqun was not chosen in random. I have pointed above to some of the salient characteristics of the munafiqun in the Prophet's age, particularly to their double-standardness, their "hypocrisy" as people of "two minds" who "say with their mouths what is not in their hearts." This is precisely why the Islamic regime has sought to equate the munafiqun of early Islam with the

contemporary opposition. The munafigun constituted a greater danger to the Prophet than the unbelievers have; the latter openly proclaimed their animosity to Islam, whereas the munafigun, on account of their hypocrisy, have opposed the Prophet while hiding behind the mask of faith. In short, the unbelievers were a recognizable enemy; the munafigun were not.

Prayer leaders have often elaborated on this essential characteristic of the munafigun, the very same characteristic that made them a greater threat to Islam than the unbelievers. Khameneh'i, for instance, stated in October 1980, that "If the enemy [shows his] enmity openly and frankly, and if he has no pretensions and hypocrisy (riyakari)," it is fairly easy to recognize him. "But when the enemy, like Ma'mun the 'Abbasid [Caliph], decorates his face with the stature and partisanship of Islam, it is difficult for the people to recognize him."¹³ In a similar fashion, 'Ali was quoted as saying that "From among the enemies, he who reveals his animosity [is] the weakest of [all] enemies, but the greatest enemy is that man who conceals (panhan mikunad) his animosity."¹⁴ And, in order to make his listeners more perceptive to the threat of the munafigun, to the fact that they are an unrecognizable, vague enemy, Khameneh'i depicted (April

1981) an illusory scenario in the Iran-Iraq War:

Suppose that the aggressive Iraqi forces ...would scatter, say, a pharmaceutical in the air [so] that the Iranian troops could not see them. How difficult would that situation be? The [enemy] would then advance forward, attacking, striking, killing, and the Iranian troops will not understand who it is, what it is, and from whence it is coming....¹⁵

This is precisely why the munafigun are more dangerous to the Muslim community than the ordinary unbelievers. Indeed, "Whatever strokes we, the Muslims, have received after the rise of Islam, it was by the hands of the munafigun, not by the hands of the unbelievers (kuffar)."¹⁶ Naturally, Islam had recognized this fact from the very beginning. This explains, prayer leaders contended, why the Qur'an itself has attached more importance to the munafigun than to the unbelievers. For instance, in surah 2 only two verses are devoted to the kafirun, whereas thirteen verses are devoted to the munafigun; and there is also a whole surah, named the munafigun, which is totally devoted to the latter.¹⁷ In a like manner, Khameneh'i stated (May 1981), that the Prophet was not afraid of the unbelievers or the polytheists, because their opposition to Islam was clear to all. The Prophet said, however, "I fear the munafig whose tongue is the tongue of the wise but whose heart is

diseased." Indeed, Khameneh'i claimed, the Prophet feared the munafigun because "They say something with their mouth which is desirable," but in practice their deeds are unacceptable.¹⁸ On another occasion (May 1981), Khameneh'i quoted 'Ali as exhorting the community "to be on guard against the People (ahl) of nifaq." Why, Khameneh'i asked, has Imam 'Ali not said ahl al-kufr or ahl al-shirk? Because "when [the munafigun] appear in many colors," when "their essence is not manifest to the people," they are the most dangerous and harmful enemy within society.¹⁹

It should be remembered, however, that the Islamic regime's discourse on the munafigun was not merely intended to enhance the people's knowledge of early Islamic history. As mentioned, the main purpose was to equate contemporary opposition with the Prophet's munafigun opponents, and thereby to justify their ruthless suppression. Indeed, if the opponents of the Islamic Revolution, the neo-munafigun, are the most dangerous and deceitful enemy of the Muslim community they need be pulverized into ashes without mercy. They should be dealt with just as the Prophet has dealt with them at the advent of Islam: "They are," as Watt put it, referring to the early munafigun, "to be treated roughly, threatened with

Hell as apostates, and practically excluded from the community."²⁰ But first, the Islamic regime had to show that they are indeed munafiqun; that the contemporary internal enemies of the Islamic regime are a reenactment of the munafiqun at the advent of Islam. In short, the work of equation remained to be done.

The work of equating all the internal enemies of the revolution with the munafiqun of early Islam began immediately upon the reinstitution of the khutbah in July 1979. It reached its peak, however, on the eve of Bani-Sadr's impeachment and the explosion at the IRP headquarters in June 1981, signifying the beginning of the ruthless suppression of the opposition. Accordingly, references to the neo-munafiqun subsided significantly during the first half of 1982, as the opposition was effectively eliminated. Thereafter, only haphazard equations of the opposition with the munafiqun were made, referring mainly to the Iran-Iran War (see below).

In the pre-June 1981 period equations of the opposition with the munafiqun remained vague, for only seldom has the former been identified with a particular organization or individual. This reluctance to point directly to opponents reflected, in my view, the still

correct, but already strained relations between the government and the various movements and organizations that took part in the heterogeneous coalition to topple the monarchy. Their complete "betrayal of the revolution and Islam" would occur later. Meanwhile, their anti-Islamic activities would be tolerated to an extent.²¹ Thus, Taleqani reiterated (August 1979) the theme that the early munafiqun were enemies in disguise, and then claimed that Iran is infected with the same enemies. He did not disclose, however, who those enemies are. (He did mention in the same breath, however, that renegade SAVAKs are working against the nation from the region of Kurdistan.) He simply said: "We are affected with the same evil, cunning, and deceitful munafiqun." Sometimes "they appear with an Islamic face," sometimes "with the face of an Iranian," and likewise, "many...express their sympathy for the people." Nevertheless, "they say with their mouths what is not in their hearts," for "their spirit, their heart, and their soul" are those of "imperialism, Zionism and other powers." In short, he concluded, "they strike the Muslims in the guise of Islam or in the guise of an Iranian."²¹ In like manner, Khameneh'i depicted the opposition as munafiqun who operate as a "fifth column" within the country, leaving the identity of the neo-munafiqun unspecified.²²

The only sermon in this pre-June 1981 period where a so-called munafig opposition organization has been identified by name, was delivered by Khameneh'i in June 1980. The organization was the Marxist Fada'iyān-i Khalq. The timing of the sermon leaves no doubt as to why the Fada'iyān-i Khalq were chosen as a direct target. First, June 1980 coincided with a discovery of preparations for a coup, upon which dozens of arrests were made.²³ The Fada'iyān might have played a certain role in this foiled plot. And second, this was a period when Khomeini's condemnations of Communism and Marxism were translated into violent action by some of his followers, most notably the Hizbollahis, the armed "street movement" of the regime.²⁴ At any rate, in his sermon Khameneh'i reminded his audience of the basic traits of the munafigun -- their hypocrisy, their stated pretensions as opposed to their inward, true beliefs. He immediately added that there are "leftist groups" that "have drawn the sword against this nation," although they adorn themselves in the plumes of Islam and fidelity. Some of them, he said, claim to be "the devotees of the people" (fada'i-'i khalqand), and "the supporters of the workers." Nevertheless, the same "Devotees of the People" (Fada'iyān-i Khalq), the same "supporters of the people and of the proletariat," never

follow up on their pretensions. In a like manner, "they pretend to be Muslims, they pretend to be supportive of the regime of the Islamic Republic, but they don't put this pretension into practice." In short, they have revealed their hypocritical faces just like their munafiqun ancestors have.²⁵

In the months leading to the climactic period of mid-1981, equations of contemporary opponents with the early munafiqun continued with a vengeance. Yet, prayer leaders were still determined not to disclose the identity of the equated organizations or individuals. In retrospect, it is clear that they have fixed the main blame on the "liberal" president Bani-Sadr, who has repeatedly tried to steer Iran away from the clerics' total domination, but also on the Mujahidin-i Khalq, which has acted in close cooperation with the former.²⁶ However, as long as Khomeini has been willing to lend Bani-Sadr his support against the cause of the clerics, particularly those identified with Ayatollah Beheshti and the IRP, no prayer leader dared to speak out against the president in public. It appears that they relied on the intelligence of their informed audiences to understand who the objects of their equations are.

Thus, in the months preceding Bani-Sadr's dismissal and the explosion at the IRP headquarters, conventional, unspecified equations of the opposition with the munafiqun persisted.²⁷ Yet, as the power struggle between the president and the 'ulama' of the IRP intensified, prayer leaders have been more willing to identify Bani-Sadr as their object of equations, stopping short, however, of calling him by name. For instance, in April 1981, approximately two months before Bani-Sadr's fall, Khameneh'i began his sermon by making a general observation that "the most dangerous enemy who had threatened the revolution of the prophets throughout history...are the munafiqun." He then went on to discuss the characteristics of the munafiqun, namely, their hypocrisy and concealed animosity to religion, as opposed to their outward allegiance to Islam and to the community of believers. He cited the following Qur'anic verse to prove his case:

And there are some people who say: We believe in Allah and the last day; and they are not at all believers. They desire to deceive Allah and those who believe, and they deceive only themselves and they do not perceive (2:8-10).

Hence, Khameneh'i explained, "The munafiq expresses something with his mouth and outwardly, while he has no belief in [what he says] deep in his heart." Khameneh'i then made a statement about a certain member of

contemporary Iranian society who shares those nifag qualities. And that certain individual was unmistakably Bani-Sadr, who at the time was on the brink of loosing his struggle with the clerics:

Even though he disbelieves, he expresses belief out of fear for his life, for covetousness, for laying his hands on power...or for the sake of opportunism....If he gains a share, influence and a profit from the revolution...he becomes ...happy and diminishes (taglil mi'dahad) his opposition to the revolution. But should he gain nothing from the revolution...he raises cries of discontent, in accordance with his carnal wishes. The Qur'an says: 'And of them [the munafiqun] there are those who blame you with respect to the alms; so if they are given from it they are pleased, and if they are not given from it, lo! They are full of rage' (9:58). If something is given to him...from the...spoils, he is satisfied; he also does not speak badly of the revolution....But as soon as the foundations of this share grow feeble, he raises cries of discontent, and his interior (batin), which opposes the revolution, becomes manifest. 'And they swear by Allah that they are most surely of you' (9:56). He is even willing to take an oath of rendering service to the revolution...he is willing to claim support for the Imam and the revolution because he sees his self-interests in this.²⁸

As the moment of truth was fast approaching, prayer leaders were even more indicative of their target of equation, Bani-Sadr's and his supporters' still unmentioned names notwithstanding. This time, however, they added to their list of neo-munafiqun opposition leaders who had fled Iran in order to avoid persecution.

For instance, in two successive sermons (May 1981), Khameneh'i traced two groups of munafigun at the time of the Prophet. First, those who, after the Prophet's victory, had fled Medina and, upon arriving in Byzantine, had promised to help the empire in the elimination of the Prophet and his movement. In short, this group of munafigun had no faith from the outset. The second group were those who embraced Islam "outwardly," that is, their faith was neither strong nor sound. Hence, as soon as the new community of believers encountered hardships they immediately abandoned Islam. And, Khameneh'i continued,

In our own society too, there were the [same] two groups. Some had no faith...from the beginning, not in Islam, not in Islamic government, not in the Islamic Republic, and not in the Imam [Khomeini]. However, they had no choice but to accept [them]. [These are] the same renegades who had fled Iran [because] ...the Islamic government did not take them into account.²⁹

No doubt, Khameneh'i claimed, "the issue is a very familiar issue: the fleeing of the anti-revolutionaries from the center of the Islamic government, taking refuge in the laps of...the superpowers, and [their] readiness to return [to Iran] and break the Islamic Revolution."³⁰ So much for the first group. And, with respect to the second group, whose contemporary representatives were, no doubt, Bani-Sadr and the leadership of the Mujahidun-i Khalq,

There were also some who had faith in Islam and

in the Islamic Republic from the beginning, but [because] of covetousness [and] hearts overflowing with personal desire, when they saw, no, the Islamic government is not prepared to take adulterated individuals into account, the Islamic government is troublesome [to them], it takes away [their] vain distinctions ...they became discontented with the Islamic government and joined the ranks of the munafiqun.³¹

When the massive clerical offensive to eliminate Bani-Sadr politically finally led the latter to go into hiding (June 11, 1981), all the mist evaporated completely; Bani-Sadr was named the leader of a subversive movement of nifaq in the country.³² And, when seventeen days later a bomb exploded at the IRP headquarters, the Mujahidin-i Khalq (which was charged with the blast) was added to the nifaq movement; henceforth, they were branded as those "munafiqun who call themselves mujahidun,"³³ or simply as the Munafiqun-i Khalq.

The Islamic Republic of Iran was therefore confronting a two-edged munafiqun movement, that is, a "liberal" faction (represented by Bani-Sadr) and a "Marxist" faction (represented by the Mujahidin-i Khalq). Rafsanjani, for instance, explained in July 1981 the essence of this indigenous movement. He stated that Iran was encountering two "basic trends (jariyan) of nifaq." In principle, he

said, both are "antithetical to one another," but in practice they have joined hands to obliterate "the Islamic movement." The one trend is that "of the so-called leftist Muslims," the so-called Mujahidin-i Khalq. They are munafiqun because "they claim to be Muslims, they claim to be struggling for Islam," yet their faith is merely "verbal," their "contents" are those of kufr. The second "trend of nifaa" is that of "liberalism." They too, are munafiqun, because "They say, 'We are Muslims'," but they aren't. They are not one with Islam by virtue of their social and economic programs, their ethics, political contacts and foreign policy. The two nifaa trends are totally opposed to each other because, "One [supports] liberalism, the other centralism; one is Marxist in its economics, and the other is capitalist." In short, they are an embodiment of what the Qur'an has to say of the munafiqun: "You may think them as one body, and their hearts are disunited."³⁴

There are further proofs to their nifaa nature. If the Mujahidin-i Khalq claim to be Muslims, why then do they oppose the Islamic Republic which is, by definition, Islamic? Moreover, why do they adopt anti-Islamic methods? The method of Islam is "to exhort and to advise" -- not to shed the blood of Muslims with impunity through

meaningless terrorist actions. And, they claim to be revolutionary and progressive, but in reality they are dependent upon the East and the West.³⁵ This and more. As munafiqun they are "Wavering between that and this, belonging neither to these or to those" (3:143). In other words, a full-fledged munafiq has no purpose, he is hanging in thin air -- "sometimes he is gravitated [to one side] and sometimes he is gravitated [to another side]." Such are the Munafiqun-i Khalq: "According to themselves, they suddenly surfaced as a radical group...and until today how many a time have they turned a somersault, and how many a time has their face changed"; how often have "they changed their qiblah" and their "goal." Indeed, in the wake of the Shah's overthrow they demanded the dissolution of the Army and, accordingly, shouted slogans in favor of the Revolutionary Guards. Yet, now they support the Army and their main object of ruthless attacks are the Guards. Furthermore, in the past they shouted anti-imperialist slogans, but today "they nakedly rally behind the West, cooperate with fugitive SAVAKs and speak highly of the West."³⁶

The case of Bani-Sadr, according to prayer leaders, is even more illustrative. The Qur'an says of the munafiqun: "That is because they believe, then disbelieve, so a seal

is set upon their hearts so they do not understand" (63:3). In other words, because of their "delusion" (ghurur) and "arrogance" (takabbur) they cannot "understand the nation." Such is Bani-Sadr: "Even now, after he had gone to Paris, Mr. Bani-Sadr truly believes that 'In Iran, ninety percent of the people are with me'." He is really sincere in this belief. However, only a deluded and arrogant man can have such false pretenses: "The same man who [claims] the support of ninety percent, had to hide in the toilet" following his dismissal. It is the same deluded and arrogant (in short, munafig) individual of whom an eyewitness to his escape said, "When I saw him coming out of the toilet and sweat running down his face, I felt ashamed that the proclaimed president ...is escaping in such a way." Today he still claims the support of the overwhelming majority of the people. It is no wonder -- he is but a munafig.³⁷

The pathetic nature of the contemporary munafigun (as embodied in Bani-Sadr and the Mujahidin-i Khalq) notwithstanding, they were, nonetheless, considered the most dangerous and formidable foes of the Islamic Republic. Rafsanjani, for instance, spoke (August 1981) of the three interdependent enemies of the Islamic Revolution: (1) "Shah\despotism"; (2) "U.S.\imperialism";

and (3) nifag\fasad. They depend on each other, Rafsanjani explained, because imperialist exploitation cannot strike roots in society without internal despotism; internal despotism cannot remain without the support of imperialism; and the first two cannot survive without fasad or nifag. Although the three "trends" are "separated," at the same time they "nourish from each other, they strengthen from each other and they guard each other." And, the victim of all three are the people. The first two enemies have been eliminated with the overthrow of the Shah and the seizure of the American embassy, both in 1979. The third enemy, the nifag movement, survived the defeat of the first two, and has reached its climax during "the story of Mr. Bani-Sadr's presidency." This trend is the most dangerous enemy inasmuch as all "ill-wishers" consider it the most valuable and effective means of defeating the revolution. Furthermore, they began their terrorist activities at the most opportune time for themselves -- but at the most crucial time for the nation of Iran -- when "several Iraqi divisions invaded [our] territory." And, indeed, no nation in human history, save Iran, has encountered such extensive and violent terrorist acts.³⁸

Having identified internal opponents as munafiqun, the

Islamic regime has pledged to deal with them just as the "Supernatural Beings" at the advent of Islam have dealt with their hypocritical adversaries. In short, they must be eliminated. There are three essential stages to be pursued before elimination, however. First, it is necessary to recognize the munafig individual attentively and decisively. As 'Ali advised his loyal governor Malik Ashtar: "O Malik! When the enemy draws near to you in order to deceive...confront [him] with prudence, with determination and with precision. Lay aside...favorable opinion; there is no place for good opinion [in the] confrontation with the unseen enemy -- there is place for suspicion....Muslim society...needs to recognize the enemy."³⁹

Second, upon recognition it should be determined whether or not the munafig individual is a "belligerent" (muharrib). According to the Prophet's conduct, Rafsanjani explained (July 1981), "the munafig can live under the protection of Islam...as long as he has not started a war...[or declared] a state of rebellion." But when the "veil of nifaa" has fallen, when "the curtain has been lifted and he has taken a sword in his hand, standing up against the Islamic Revolution," his status changes to a muharrib. Indeed, Rafsanjani exclaimed, "The majority of

whom we address today as munafiqun [are]...
belligerents."⁴⁰

Finally, as belligerents they are to be treated with no mercy. As the Qur'an says of the belligerent munafiqun: "If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease and the agitators in the city do not desist, We shall most certainly set you over them" (33:60).⁴¹ Or, as Rafsanjani vividly stated in the initial phase of the crackdown: "I clearly say: the solution to the problem of the munafiqun will not be other than what the Qur'an has set forth." The munafiqun, he continued, are not a "new problem." They have been the gravest problem at the advent of Islam too. The policy of the Prophet and of the Commander of the Faithful toward this problem "has been crystal clear" -- both executed precisely what the Qur'an enjoins. Even 'Ali, the same 'Ali who couldn't harm an ant, performed the Qur'an's prescription and hence murdered four-thousand munafiqun (khawarij?) in the duration of a short period. No doubt, both the Prophet and 'Ali carried out the following Qur'anic injunction:

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Apostle and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands or their feet should be cut off on opposite sides (5:33).⁴²

On the eve of the Iranian new year of 1361 (1982-83), Khameneh'i delivered a sermon in which he congratulated the Muslim nation of Iran for having successfully rooted out the bases of nifaa in the country. The preceding year, he said -- alluding to violent actions by the opposition -- had been a "bitter" year. Indeed, the nation had shed blood, it sacrificed its beloved sons, and "how many a bitter night and day you have experienced" throughout the year of 1360. But, Khameneh'i assured, "And it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you" (2:316). This is to say, in spite (or, perhaps, on account) of all hardships and agonies the year has ended with "a clear victory": "how many faces have been disclosed; how many false freedom-seekers and so-called popular masks have fallen off the faces." In other words, the nation was able to "easily recognize those deceitful faces, those dressed-up faces"; it has gained a victory in the first and second revolutions, against the Shah and the United States, respectively, and now it has come out victorious from the "third revolution" against the "line of nifaa." In short, "the report card for the year 1360 is a bloody, red-colored report card, full of pain and sorrow," but it, nonetheless, brought "glad-tidings" and "warmth" to the nation of Iran.⁴³

Thus the opposition had been crushed. It is true, some opposition organizations and groupings remained operative, but they "kept alive by remaining underground hiding their time in the hope of reemerging in post-Khomeini Iran."⁴⁴ Accordingly, references to the opposition subsided dramatically, and only seldom in this post-crackdown period have prayer leaders identified any specific individual or grouping with the munafigun of early Islam.⁴⁵

If the naming of specific individuals and organizations as munafigun virtually came to a halt, the ongoing Iran-Iraq War has made sure that at least general equations of contemporary "ill-wishers" with the early munafigun would persist. These references began immediately after the outbreak of the war in September 1980. They outlived the examined above accounts because, unlike the stifled opposition, the situation in the war front and its repercussions on the home front, continued to constitute a major challenge to the regime. In other words, it appears that the Islamic regime sought to exploit the people's frustration with the indefinite postponement of "final victory," and with the mounting casualties and economic burdens of war, by fixing the

blame on and diverting the backlash to an amorphous internal enemy, a "fifth-column" called munafigun.

For instance, prayer leaders have been particularly fond of equating those who voiced their opposition to the war with the munafigun of the Battle of the Trench (627), who were critical of Muhammad's methods, skeptical of a successful result, and "would gladly kept out of the fighting and might even have gone over to the enemy had there been an opportunity."⁴⁶ Within this context, they claimed that the munafigun of the Battle of the Trench "wanted to cause confusion and agitation" among the defenders of Medina. And, this is precisely what their Iranian contemporary descendants are attempting to do to the defenders of the Islamic Republic:

The nation of Iran is in a state of war with its enemy. War has its insecurity, its displeasure, its shortage of commodities...its casualties, [as well as] the anxiety of fathers and mothers for [the fate] of their children. These...munafigun [however] make twice as grave all these misfortunes and inconveniences.... They emphasize...calamities...and make them twice as grave....They extract the hope from the heart of the people. The people hear [of our victories], their heart is gladdened.... Suddenly, there appears a munafig [who] tries to take away their hope...through agitation and [treacherous] activity.⁴⁷

In a similar manner, Rafsanjani equated (April 1987)

the Battle of the Trench with the situation during the so-called "war of the cities," when both Iraq and Iran exchanged missiles at each other's urban populations. In both cases, he said, the munafigun gathered valuable information and logistics which they handed over to the enemy. They were particularly effective in supplying information about "vulnerable localities" which the enemy hastened to capitalize on when attacking.⁴⁸ In other words, the contemporary munafigun, just like their ancestors, have become a "fifth-column." They are maintaining connections with the Iraqi enemy; they are the "hirelings of Saddam," because they supply him with data on the movement of Iranian troops, the location of factories, the distribution of commodities, and so forth.⁴⁹

Moreover, in September 1984, Rafsanjani observed that the conduct of internal "agitators" in the Iran-Iraq War resembles the conduct of the munafigun during the Prophet's expedition to Tabuk (near the Gulf of Akaba) in 630. First, he referred to the so-called "mosque of dissension" which the munafigun built at the time of the expedition as "a convenient meeting-place where they could hatch their plots without interruption."⁵⁰ He then argued that this resembles the "safe-houses" of

contemporary munafigun. Second, Rafsanjani mentioned the munafigun's evil propaganda during the Prophet's expedition, namely, their complaints and objections to the personal discomfort of taking part in a war and to the contributions they were expected to make. Such are the munafigun of today, he declared: their propaganda too, is meant to "demoralize the people." Furthermore, some munafigun of the Tabuk expedition offered a variety of pretexts in order to avoid enlistment to the war. For instance, one of them approached the Prophet and said: "I have inordinate desire for many women," and now you are sending me to war against Byzantine where many "Western women" reside. "I will be tempted, and I fear of committing fasad....[A]llow me to stay behind." Rafsanjani then argued, "We hear the same words today." That is, the descendants of those munafigun are saying "Saddam is our brother, the Ba'th party is our brother," we therefore cannot go to the front.⁵¹

To sum up, the Islamic regime's stress on the nifaq qualities of its contemporary opponents was meant to justify their violent suppression and, in the case of the Iran-Iraq conflict, to justify the government's shortcomings in handling the war. On a broader level, however, it appears that the title munafigun with which

the regime has referred to the opposition was aimed at achieving yet another, not less important goal. I have shown in chapter five that the legitimization campaign of the Islamic government consisted of depictions of the Islamic Revolution as a reenactment of the Prophet's "Islamic Revolution" at the advent of Islam. Thus, the labelling of the opposition as munafigun may be viewed as part of this self-legitimization campaign. This is to say, not only are the two revolutions identical, but their opponents are identical as well -- both are munafigun. The Islamic Revolution in twentieth century Iran thus emerges as an even more identical duplicate of the "sacred event" which is presented in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth.

To return to our subject, the growing dissatisfaction among many Iranians with unmaterialized expectations, the government's failure to achieve self-sufficiency or to improve the lot of the mustaz'afin, and, in this respect, the steady deterioration in the economy, the growing alienation between the haves and have-nots, and the overwhelming shortages of basic commodities, coupled with the mounting burdens of war, presented the Islamic regime perhaps with the most serious challenge of all. What was at stake was the very support of a disillusioned population for a regime that had promised relief and

material improvement. The regime's first dilemma was therefore how to maintain the people's support, their unity of ranks, the so-called vahdat-i kalamah (literally, "unity of word," or simply "unity") of the nation behind the revolution and behind the government's (largely failed) policies.

The necessity of maintaining unity, despite hardships and suffering, was once again justified through appeals to the government myth of early Islam. As will be seen below, most sermons dedicated to this subject proposed to "return" to the unity of the community in early Islam or, at least, to follow the exhortations of the Prophet and 'Ali to obey the "leader" and to establish fraternity and harmony within society. However, two sermons should be discussed from the outset because they untypically implied that the necessity of achieving unity and unconditional support for the regime should not be pursued through the reenactment of myth. In other words, the issue of unity was the one single exception where prayer leaders have had recourse to myths, not as a model and a paradigm for how things should be done ever after, but, on the contrary, as the antithesis of what should be pursued or achieved.

The first sermon was delivered by Montazeri in October

1979.⁵² The myth he chose to narrate in making his point was also unique since it dealt with the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, and not with a certain event described in the government myth of early Islam or in other parts of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth. At any rate, Montazeri began his sermon by stating that the unity of the people and their devotion to Imam Khomeini were the underlying reasons for the victory of the revolution. And, he added, "We are duty-bound to always renew our unity with our leader, to renew our pledge of allegiance [to him]." He then went on to narrate what might be called the "un-reenactable" myth, the liberation of the Children of Israel from the "taghuti" government of the Pharaoh." As soon as the Israelites arrived in the desert, Montazeri said,

the first thing they demanded from Moses was
'We want garlic, we want onion and we don't
have lentil....' [Instead of being] thankful
for the grace of deliverance from oppression
...they demanded garlic and onion.

Then, when Moses received the "divine decree" to set out for Canaan and make the country the Israelites' possession, his people told him: "No Moses, we are no longer your men: 'Go...you and your Lord, then fight you both, surely we will here sit down' (5:24)...we are not prepared to fight for it [Canaan]." Thereupon, Montazeri referred to the shortages of food supplies in contemporary

Iran, implying that the nation, unlike the Children of Israel, should not abandon their unity and allegiance to Khomeini on account of material hardships. "Be patient," he said. "Is there a greater blessing than the blessing of freedom?....The grace of freedom is the best of [all] graces. Make effort...The shortages will diminish gradually."

In the second sermon, Khameneh'i narrated (May 1980) a part of the government myth of early Islam, that which describes the Battle of Uhud, the near-disaster which befell the Muslim community in the year 3 A.H (625).⁵³ It may be recalled how prayer leaders praised the Iranian nation (see chapter five) for having surpassed the community at the time of the Prophet. On this occasion Khameneh'i elaborated on the divisions among the ranks of the Muslims as the main reason for the Prophet's defeat at Uhud, and, accordingly, on the need to avoid such divisions in contemporary Iran. In a word, Khameneh'i has warned the people not to repeat the bitter experience of Uhud by undermining their own unity and overwhelming loyalty to the "leader."

According to the Qur'an, Khameneh'i observed, three "faults" caused the defeat at Uhud, all pointed out in the

Qur'an 3:152. First, "you disputed." That is, Khameneh'i explained, the Muslims community rendered the "unity of ranks" (vahdat-i sufuf) and the "unity of word" null and void.⁵⁴ Second, "you became weak-hearted." In other words, the Muslims lost their "fervor, enthusiasm and preparedness." And finally, "you disobeyed." That is, the Muslims "avoided the command of the Prophet and the leader."⁵⁵ Hence, the infidel enemy was able "to inflict their blows [on] the most beloved children of Islam." Khameneh'i then turned to speak of the state of affairs in contemporary Iran, urging his compatriots to maintain their unity: "Today," he said, "the same [Qur'anic] statement is addressed to us." The nation has several times defeated the enemy by virtue of its unity and obedience to the commands of the leader, Khomeini. The enemy is therefore seeking to retaliate, just as the infidels retaliated at Uhud after their defeat at Badr in the year before. Thus, "We must root out amidst ourselves the three faults which the Muslims of the Battle of Uhud have been entangled with." In short, the nation of Iran must guard their vahdat-i kalamah; it should stifle all "melodies of division." Moreover, "Obedience to the leader must be complete. Should he command, we must follow." This is the only way to transform the defeat at Uhud into a glorious victory.

Other references to the government myth in the context of unity and obedience to the leader have been, as expected, of a more positive nature. That is to say, they were told as a source of emulation, not as a negative example to shun away from. Thus, in regards to the issue of unity, prayer leaders have urged their audiences to "return to the unity and solidity (yakparchagi)" of the advent of Islam; to pay heed to the "recommendation" of the Prophet and 'Ali to preserve unity in the face of formidable foreign enemies. The Prophet, it was said, strove to achieve "unity of thought and unity of voice" within his community. The nation of Iran too, should put an end to all "petty differences" and establish "tawhid, fraternity and harmony among the masses of the people."⁵⁶

In this respect, prayer leaders have been particularly fond of quoting from 'Ali's will and testament to his two sons, Hasan and Husayn, where he admonished them to preserve "order" and unity through "mutual liking, friendship and love." 'Ali also told his two sons, "Reconciliation among people is better than all prayer and fast." "Chaos" (harj va-marj), 'Ali asserted, "should not be." Indeed, this will was not addressed to Hasan and

Husayn only. For the Commander of the Faithful told his two sons, "My will should reach every person." It is therefore relevant to the Muslim nation of Iran as well. The Iranian nation should pay heed to the words of 'Ali and do away with "existing divisions." In a like manner, the nation should appreciate that

If there would be chaos in [our] affairs, we will achieve nothing. There must be order in the Army in the Revolutionary Guards, everywhere; there must be order in the provinces [and] in the Gendarmerie....If there will be chaos, it means that we shall not have an army.⁵⁷

This necessity of preserving the unity of the armed forces was particularly emphasized in 1979, when the Revolutionary Guards and the Army contested for military predominance. Not surprisingly, it was 'Ali who once again came to the rescue, allegedly saying, "The armed forces are a powerful fort which the nation must guard." And, the conclusion drawn, was that both the Army and the Revolutionary Guards should avoid "petty differences" and "be companions and unified."⁵⁸

The theme of unity was, at times, related to the theme of "consultation" (mashvarat). A few words on the representations of this latter theme in sermons are therefore necessary. Without doubt, consultation figured high in the regime's campaign to depict itself as the

embodiment of social justice and a democratic way of life. Thus, on the eve of elections to the local councils in October 1979, for instance, it was said that they should be a model of consultation, which is the only means of avoiding tyranny.⁵⁹ And consultation, prayer leaders argued, is not a novel notion; in essence, it too is a return to the days of the Prophet who was ordered by God, "And take counsel with them in the affairs" (3:159). Indeed, when the Prophet wanted to achieve something, he consulted with the Muslims. For instance, in the Battle of the Trench he sat with his fellow Muslims and asked them, "What is your opinion? Should we go out of the city, or should we remain in the city?" In a like manner, in the Battle of Badr the Prophet sought the Muslims' advice. He asked, "We are not prepared to go to war, should we fight or not?" 'Ali followed suit. "When I have a vision (did)," he reportedly said, "if I were to consult with one...with two individuals, with ten individuals, I will acquire ten visions; I append ten minds to my own mind." It is therefore clear that "people must consult with one another in their conduct."⁶⁰ It is also clear that the subjects should be consulted by the ruler and not shrink from admonishing him. For 'Ali said: al-nasihah fi-al-mashad wa-al-maghayyab, or, according to Ardebili's own translation, "whether in [my] presence or in absentia, be

attentive to my conduct." That is to say, "You must point out [to me]...my errors, my digressions, [and] my failings wherever you observe [them]...."⁶¹ Thus, the people "must show [the ruler] the path to development and welfare." The ruler is like "a father of a family whose members ...have the right to object him, but...not molest him."⁶²

How, then, was the theme of consultation related to the theme of unity? Consultation, prayer leaders said, has its limits. Although it is an outstanding means of avoiding tyranny and despotic rule, there is a time when it must cease, for otherwise it might lead to social disorder, chaos and anarchy. Indeed, when a majority decision is taken on a matter, consultation should be laid aside and all are duty-bound work together, in unity and harmony, to put it into practice. Even those who oppose the decision should join hands with its supporters and advance forward -- unity must prevail. It is noteworthy, that this line of reasoning was especially popular on the eve and immediately after the approval by a plebiscite of the Constitution in mid-November 1979, when the opposition either criticized its contents as undemocratic or boycotted the plebiscite altogether.⁶³ If a majority approved the constitution, prayer leaders pleaded, all

must be united in the task of putting it into practice.

To illustrate their case, prayer leaders have once again turned to the Prophet for help. It is true, they observed, God had said to the Prophet, "Take counsel with them in the affair" (3:159). It is therefore clear that "It is divine wisdom to take counsel." But the same verse continues as follows: "So when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah." This is to say, "O Prophet! Once a decision is taken, put your trust in God and advance forward with resoluteness." This, however, does not undermine the principle of consultation:

A non-commissioned officer should not be fearful of expressing his opinion to the officer, and the ordinary soldier should not be fearful of expressing his opinion to the non-commissioned officer. And all three should not be fearful of expressing their [opinion] to the most highest ranks....But when a decision is taken on a matter, there should not be harj va-marj...[or else] the matter will not be accomplished.⁶⁴

In short, once a decision is taken, all must follow suit; all are obliged to be united behind the cause of the revolution.

Let's turn now to the related issue of the people's obedience to and support for the regime. The most basic argument that was presented by prayer leaders in this

regard, was that in times of difficulties, as in times of tranquility, "No Islamic government can perform [its] duties without the presence and assistance of the people in all...affairs." And, it is not surprising that they went on to say, "Even the Prophet, who [was] an exceptional Muslim ruler, couldn't perform his duties without the assistance of the people."⁶⁵ According to prayer leaders, however, the most authoritative advocate of the people's support for the regime was Imam 'Alī. On various occasions prayer leaders elaborated upon 'Alī's notion of the reciprocal duties of the ruler and the people. I will discuss the first part of this equation (the ruler's duties vis a vis the people) later on. Concerning the people's duties toward the government, Imam 'Alī allegedly said:

People! You voted for me; you swore allegiance to me; you wanted me; you called for me, and I accepted this government. You must be faithful to your [oath of] allegiance. You must cooperate with me.⁶⁶

Furthermore, according to 'Alī, the people are duty-bound "to respect" the ruler, "to obey him, to follow him, not to leave him alone in the arena," and not allow the enemy "to make aggression against his reputation, personality and authority." They are to cooperate with him "sincerely," not undermine his authority, and "not break their relations with him." And last but not least, "if the

leader wants the people to do something," they should accept it "heartily."⁶⁷ This latter requirement was not without practical use for the Islamic regime, however. This was especially true in mid-1982, when prayer leaders took great pains to revive the declining enthusiasm of the people to join in battle against Iraq. Thus, in April 1982 Ardebili restated 'Ali's expectations from the people, quoting the latter as saying, "whenever I call on you, you must respond favorably." Ardebili then added,

Yes, this is the right of the government, to call upon us, and we should respond. When it calls upon us, when it says, 'People! Volunteers! We want to go to war against Saddam-kafir and eliminate the traces of aggression'...you must respond to it.⁶⁸

To sum up, the continuing stress by means of the government myth on the need for internal unity and obedience to the clerical regime, reverberates the authoritarian nature of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As Savory observes, "The key Qur'anic text on the subject of government (4:59) is: 'O ye who believe! Obey God, and obey His Messenger, and those who are in authority among you.' In Khomeini's Iran the religious leaders have declared themselves to be 'those who are in authority among you'....Their authority is therefore absolute. It may be expressed in the formula: obedience to the faqih

equals obedience to the Hidden Imam equals obedience to God." Conversely, Disobedience to the faqih, as we have seen in the case of the contemporary Iranian munafiqun, "constitutes not only a crime against the state but a sin against God, and capital punishment is the normal punishment for such disobedience."⁶⁹

It would be wrong to assume, however, that the leaders of revolutionary Iran attempted to eliminate social discontents by simply stressing the need for unity and support for the government. It would be equally unfair to conclude that the Islamic regime's rhetoric has completely ignored the mounting and unresolved social and economic problems. Indeed, throughout the time span of this research, prayer leaders have repeatedly put forward different ways and means of redressing deficiencies in society, and of solving Iran's burdensome social and economic problems. And these ways and means too, as will be seen below, were drawn from the government myth of early Islam.

To begin with, the most basic supposition of prayer leaders was that Muslim society, such as that in Iran, should enjoy "security" (amniyat) and "welfare" (rafah). Without doubt, they claimed, the establishment of security

and welfare in society was a primary goal of all the divine Prophets. Indeed, God said to his Prophet, "So let them serve the Lord of this House, who feeds them against hunger and gives them security against fear" (106:3-4). In a like manner, Abraham implored God, "My Lord, make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits" (2:106). It is therefore clear that both security and welfare have been "of the great goals of all the revolutions of the great prophets." Thus, the nation of Iran too should make security and welfare one of its foremost priorities. If poverty is not eliminated, if the material needs of the mahrumin and the mustaz'afin are not met, and if security is not provided, Iranian society will not achieve its lofty and revolutionary goals.⁷⁰

Security, as we saw above, has already been achieved through the elimination of the opposition. What remained, then, was to bring about welfare by resolving all social and economic problems. And this will be pursued, prayer leaders implied, in the same manner that Iran has solved the burden of the munafiqun -- by applying to each and every problem the precedents set forth by the Prophet and 'Ali; by endorsing the very same policies of the "Supernatural Beings" at the advent of Islam.

For instance, it is a known fact that housing, already a serious problem under the Shah, remained as such long after the ascendancy of the 'ulama' to power. As Menashri writes, "Iranian low-income earners lived mainly in rented apartments. Their situation could be inferred from statistics for 1981 according to which 1,400,000 families in Tehran shared only 900,000 apartments. Since Iran had no rent protection laws, a housing shortage meant a perpetual struggle between tenant and landlord, with the latter frequently raising the rent, or using various devices to force the tenants to leave."⁷¹ Seeking to tackle this grave problem of housing shortage, Montazeri delivered a lengthy sermon in October 1979. He began, however, with the seemingly unrelated story about the 'Ansar and the Muhajirun at the time of the Prophet's hijrah to Medina. The Prophet, he said, asked the 'Ansar to apportion a certain amount of their wealth to the needy and homeless Muhajirun. The former replied: "We will share [our] house, lodging, life, wealth, whatever we have, among ourselves and the Muhajirin, and all the spoils of war too, are the property of the Muhajirun." In short, Montazeri asserted, the 'Ansar "prefer[red] them before themselves though poverty may afflict them" (59:9). Having made clear the point of the 'Ansar's generosity, Montazeri turned to speak of contemporary Iran, directing his words

to wealthy landlords, urging them to follow the example of the 'Ansar and thus solve the housing problem:

I am addressing you, landlords. If you -- you, who own an additional house, an additional apartment -- want to help this revolution, to take part in this holy revolution, to be joined with the 'Ansar of the beginning of Islam...do not withhold [these apartments]. You have a vacant house, you have a vacant apartment, sell it, put it on a lease, for those who don't have. Don't you know how hard it is [to be] homeless (bi-manzali)?"²

Another burning economic and social concern for the Islamic regime has been the plague of hoarding and profiteering. Hoarding and profiteering have reached new peaks as a result of the economic sanctions imposed by the United States and, eventually, as a result of the war against Iraq, as basic commodities have grown scarce and as price rises have put them beyond the reach of the "dispossessed." Vigorous campaigns against hoarders and profiteers have not been overwhelmingly successful, as well as the efforts of the Gasht-i 'Ansar-i Allah ("Patrols of the Assistants of God") to bring to trial offenders guilty of economic crimes. The failure to uproot the problem notwithstanding, the Islamic regime has done the utmost to justify the need for persecuting hoarders and profiteers. And, who if not 'Ali could have demonstrated this point better. Montazeri, for instance,

urged (November 1979) his fellow Muslims, "don't overcharge, don't hoard." He then revealed to his listeners that 'Ali has many times ordered his judge to bastinado the hoarder and to put his confiscated wealth up for auction. Hence, Montazeri, concluded, "The government is duty-bound to treat the hoarders in a like manner." They will no longer amass "the food and the sustenance of the servants of God" for their own benefit.⁷³

The shortages brought about by a deteriorating economy were not confined to housing or to basic commodities; they were felt in every conceivable sector and hence the people were vigorously asked to economize. (During the summer of 1983, for instance, water supplies broke down for long periods, and the Water Organization called on all residents to use water sparingly.⁷⁴) Once again, the Prophet and 'Ali were called upon to inspire the people, this time to conserve and avoid dissipation and lavishness. Nevertheless, in this campaign for conservation, appeals to the government myth of the Prophet and 'Ali were not confined to the common people. They were just as equally meant to convince state-officials and other holders of important posts to "mend their ways" and to put an end to their "embezzlements." In other words, references to the latter in the context of

conservation have somehow carried with them, as will be seen below, the bad smell of corruption or misconduct.⁷⁵

In regards to addressing people from all walks of life, Imami-Kashani, for instance, called upon each and every Iranian (June 1983) not to waste paper. To this end, he observed that the Prophet himself was a staunch advocate of conservation. For, the Prophet said, "Even if you drink a glass of water all at once, and you spill the remainder, this is lavishment." Likewise, the Prophet said, "Even the fruit-stone of a date should not be wasted." Imami-Kashani concluded with the following reproach: "If one were to look into some of the traditions and their practices...and then look into our practices," he would reveal "that nothing has been learned."⁷⁶

Within this context, during 1982-83 Rafsanjani delivered a series of approximately fifty sermons on the subject of "Islamic economics."⁷⁷ Among these at least two sermons were devoted entirely to the issue of conservation and dissipation in Islamic society. In contrast to conventional references to the subject, however, Rafsanjani spoke of the moral repercussions of lavishment, its practical implications on society notwithstanding. Lavishment, Rafsanjani explained, is

forbidden (haram), inasmuch as it underlines the polarization of society into two extremes of haves and have-nots. This is a situation where "One group of notable origin is lavishly employing and hoarding all the resources, and one indigent, poor group which is deprived, through imposed poverty, of everything....There is nothing left for them; this should not be."

In order to to illustrate the negative effects of lavishment on society, Rafsanjani informed his audience of an event involving the Caliph-Imam 'Ali. 'Ali received information according to which an old Muslim individual has his "house overflowing with riches" located beside a "cave," where "a poor and indigent family" was residing. Every day, Rafsanjani said, the old man was throwing "great quantities of his fasid food [as] garbage" and the children of the cave were "stealthily" eating the wasted food in order to quench their hunger. Upon hearing the story, Rafsanjani continued, 'Ali mounted the pulpit and declared: "Should this old man fall in my hands, first I would make him repent. If he would not repent, I will proclaim him an apostate and then whip him several times too." Rafsanjani then concluded his sermon by complaining that "Today, unfortunately...the bulk of our country is such. Of course, things have gotten better, but it is

still like that."⁷⁸

It is quite obvious that in this last citation Rafsanjani has indirectly equated the old squanderer whom 'Ali condemned with the residents of the wealthy neighborhoods of northern Tehran who, in spite of shortages and the economic predicament of most Iranians, continued, as usual, to live their extravagant consumer lives. This Rafsanjani has made more explicit in yet another sermon on Islamic economics which he devoted to dissipation and the need to economize. This time, he chose an incident from the Prophet's government myth in order to illustrate the case. It is said, Rafsanjani began, that the Prophet once returned from war and immediately went to visit his beloved daughter Fatimah. He entered her room and, upon looking around, was saddened. He hadn't told Fatimah anything and, consequently, left the room. "Zahrah was greatly moved," not understanding her father's conduct. Suddenly, however, it struck her, recalling that during her father's absence she had purchased a golden bracelet and installed ornamented curtains in her room. Indeed, Rafsanjani confirmed, this was the reason for the Prophet's displeasure with Fatimah. This was a time when the companions and the Muhajirun have been consumed by poverty and indigence. If it were not for their dire

situation, Rafsanjani explained, the Prophet would not have protested. In "regular times" he would have said nothing of his daughter's bracelet and curtains. The "circumstances of the day," such was the Prophet's view, rendered Zahrah's acquisitions a squander. The moral Rafsanjani drew from the story ran as follows:

Under the situation we live in today, it is very much unjust that [our] children are living in the fronts like [the Muhajirun] for the sake of the revolution, and we, in Tehran, are engaged in luxury life (Khush-guzarani). This is bad; this suppresses humanity.⁷⁹

However, the main body of references to lavishness and unruly squander has been directed against government officials and other individuals holding formal positions in society. References of this kind were almost always accompanied by near-allegations, or indirect allegations, of arrogance, misconduct, corruption and nepotism on their part -- of having "betrayed" their responsibility toward the nation and the revolution. It is true, prayer leaders never named any specific official for having being involved in such scandalous conduct. Nevertheless, the growing frequency with which these themes appeared in sermons in the years 1979-89, might lead one to suspect that honesty was not a distinct mark of the state apparatus in the period examined. Needless to say, the

Prophet, but mainly 'Ali, have emerged once again to help redress the situation. The priority given to 'Ali in this context is perfectly understandable, given the fact that it is by and large his brief caliphate which is regarded by the Shi'ah as "the measure of governments."⁸⁰

In their efforts to bring about the reformation of government officials, prayer leaders have been particularly fond of relaying to their listeners the First Imam's strict requirements from his own functionaries, but also from himself as a Muslim ruler. As was the case in most appeals to the government myth, the moral was usually revealed at the end, when prayer leaders turned to those contemporary state officials to whom the stories were addressed in the first place, urging them to carry out their duties in conformity with the Caliph's demands. The following appeal to 'Ali's government myth made in November 1979 faithfully reflects the aforementioned. First, the story:

'Uthman bin Hanif was the governor...[of] Basra on behalf of Imam 'Ali....Once, one of the notables...of Basra held either a banquet or a wedding party, and the great notables and distinguished persons were invited. They had nothing to do with the barefoot people; they had nothing to do with the poor and the helpless....'Uthman bin Hanif...was invited as well. Various dishes [were served.] The matter has reached 'Ali....[He immediately wrote 'Uthman, reproving him:] 'I have received

information that a person of Basra invited you to a dinner and you immediately accepted the invitation. And very sumptuous meals were served there...and you enjoyed them. I never expected that you would accept invitation of person who invites big officers and rich people and from whose doors poor persons and hungry beggars are turned away rudely....Pay heed! If it is doubtful food or forbidden food, don't eat [it]'.⁸¹

And second, the moral:

O Mr. director-general! O Mr. governor-general! O governor! O head of a district!....Listen to the words of 'Ali; don't say as you usually do, 'I'm a partisan (shi'ah) of 'Ali'....Of all clothes, ['Ali preferred] two pieces of worn-out cloths....Of all the food in the world he was satisfied with two loaves of beggarly bread. He is the Caliph; government is in 'Ali's hands; the treasury (bayt al-mal) of the Muslims is in the hands of 'Ali too. This is his life. This waste (rikht va-pash) in the administration...must stop. If government is an Islamic government...[its] countenance...must change -- all matters must undergo a revolution. When we say, 'We are the Shi'ah of 'Ali', [we should] be ready to sacrifice ourselves for 'Ali.'⁸¹

As mentioned, the above citation was taken from a sermon delivered in November 1979. It is noteworthy that the very same story and moral have been reiterated for the very same addressees in a late 1983 sermon.⁸² Thus, the problem underlined in the cited passage seems to have persisted long after government control has laid firm in the hands of the 'ulama'.

The issue of waste and embezzlement by state-

functionaries was also underscored by an incident involving the Caliph 'Ali and his brother 'Aqil. Again, the story was first told during a sermon in late 1979, and was later repeated in 1984.⁸³ Needless to say, the addressees in both cases were the same -- government officials. At any rate, it was related in both sermons that 'Ali's brother 'Aqil, a poor individual and the father of hunger-stricken children, approached 'Ali and asked him to extract from the bayt al-mal additional "three kilos" of grain for his hungry children; "not a great amount of money, not items of luxury," just one bag of grain to feed the children whose "faces have turned black" on account of their hunger. The Caliph refused adamantly. In 'Ali's view, the suffering of 'Aqil and his family did not justify the infringement upon the state's treasury. Considering his brother's case, 'Ali ruled that even three kilos of grain would be tantamount to dissipation. The moral of the story ran as follows:

O gentlemen who are accountable for the treasury! Wherever you are, you must [manage] the treasury with precaution. Whether in the ministries, in the army, or in other places, you must change your methods. I'm warning you, If you don't change your style, those faithful Muslim youngsters who have shed blood and brought the revolution to fruition, they have not died....[If] the waste persists...[if] traveling expenses...[and] the spending of money [persist]...the very same youngsters will settle their account with you; I'm telling you this frankly and clearly.

In short, "As soon as one attains a post in the administration and becomes a director-general [or] a governor-general, he should not make effort to embezzle (dastbard bizanad) the treasury for his own interests."⁸⁴

Two other faults which prayer leaders found in the conduct of officials, were displays of arrogance and haughtiness toward their employees and the public, and displays of favoritism toward relatives and friends. With respect to the first fault, Montazeri, for instance, reminded his audience that when the Prophet held sessions with his companions, he sat like the rest of them and did not enjoy special privileges. If a foreigner were to pay a visit, not knowing who the prophet was, he would most probably ask, "Who is Muhammad among you?" In other words, the prophet "sat like the rest of the slaves" with his companions. The same should hold, Montazeri warned, for high ranking officials in the army or in government offices. Indeed, their ranks don't mean much when they are at home with their families, where they perform the most trivial tasks by themselves. They must therefore put an end to the habit of ordering, say, "O soldier! Bring my hat over here!" No, Montazeri concluded, "Go yourself,

fetch your own hat and put it on your head!"⁸⁵

Furthermore, state officials should always bear in mind that the nation is undergoing a revolution, and hence it is experiencing shortages. At the same time, however, the people's expectations are high, and they long for material improvement. Officials must therefore behave kindly toward the people, they should demonstrate patience in their dealings with them. 'Ali said, asbaru al-hawajihim, "Be patient with their needs." This is to say, officials should "explain the difficulties" to the people, not "make them annoyed." They are also forbidden to use "foul language." As 'Ali wrote to Malik Ashtar, "Have compassion for both Muslims and non-Muslims."⁸⁶ Indeed, officials need only to follow in 'Ali's footsteps and encounter the public accordingly. And, just as 'Ali behaved "with kindness, compassion, love and humility toward the servants of God," so will the officials of the Islamic Republic.⁸⁷

Within this context, government officials should always bear in mind that their first and foremost obligation was to serve the people. It was precisely because of this that 'Ali never allowed his functionaries "to transgress the path of justice or to trample upon the

rights of the people."⁸⁸ And it was also because of this that 'Ali announced, "Woe unto that man who thinks he is allowed to enjoy more privileges than the people or ignore the privileges of the people on account of the responsibilities he has been entrusted with."⁸⁹

Likewise, it was the same 'Ali who said, "If the personal interest of the ruler clashes with the public interest, the ruler must relinquish his personal interest."⁹⁰ In a similar fashion, 'Ali exhorted his governor in Azerbaijan saying, "Verily, this [governorship] of yours is not...a tasty and juicy morsel to be swallowed; rather it is for fulfilling the tasks [of government] and for rendering service to the people."⁹¹ Moreover, 'Ali has repeatedly argued that the ruler "should...strive to improve...the financial and material condition of the people and [meet] all the human needs of society."⁹² And, it was also 'Ali who told the people, "I must provide you with knowledge that you may not sink in ignorance; I must educate you."⁹³

Finally, despite the important and influential position of government officials, they should treat the public as their peers because, just like the latter, they are not above the law. In short, government officials and the common people are equal wherever and whenever the law

is concerned. And, of course, it was 'Ali who was first to acknowledge this principle. Hence, during his Caliphate "the Islamic judiciary [was] able to pass judgment... against the Commander of the Faithful....['Ali's] claims were not accepted without a clear legal proof."⁹⁴

Indeed, even a Jew (!) was able to win a case against 'Ali in court. As Khameneh'i recounted, once 'Ali brought a Jew to trial, suspecting that he had stolen his coat of mail. The Jew denied. The Judge asked the Caliph if he had ability to prove otherwise? "Do you have a witness?," he asked. 'Ali replied, "No, I have no witness." The judge then ruled that he was incapable of passing a verdict in the Caliph's favor. Nevertheless, 'Ali

kept silent; he was convinced and said nothingHe did not protest....This was a government where a judge has had the courage to pass a verdict against the Commander of the Faithful. And ['Ali] could not do [anything] against a non-Muslim who stole his coat of mail. He could not reclaim his [stolen property] without a legal proof or a witness.⁹⁵

As mentioned, government officials were also accused of displaying favoritism toward their relatives and friends. Imami-Kashani has therefore made clear to them that zavabit (rules), not ravabit (connections), should govern their conduct. When an individual is considered for a post, he explained, only his "merit, his experience and

all his trustworthy aspects" should be taken into account. One should not say, "he is my friend, my relative or an acquainted," and thus he deserves the post. It was for this reason that 'Ali instructed one of his governors to employ only those who are "knowledgeable with the development of the country, who understand the population ...who understand the interests of Islam and the Muslims ...[who] are learned, informed, wise, [and]... experienced." In short, 'Ali advised his governor to do away with those individuals who might be his relatives, but are nonetheless "good-for-nothing" or unfit for the post.⁹⁶

In considering the social and economic well-being of the country, prayer leaders have thus laid much stress on the conduct of the state apparatus. Yet, they have equally emphasized the issue of labor and production when discussing the need to achieve self-sufficiency, a major, but largely unsuccessful long-term economic goal of the revolution. As will be seen below, prayer leaders have fixed the blame for the government's apparent failure to achieve self-sufficiency on the reluctance of most Iranians to engage themselves in manual labor. And, in order to encourage the people not to shun hard work prayer leaders have, as expected, turned to examine the Prophet's

and 'Ali's views and practices on the matter.

For instance, prayer leaders have often denounced Iranians infected by the notion that "because I have a diploma or a Bachelor of Arts Degree, I should sit behind a desk." Iran, they claimed, has enough white-collar people, "not all must be managers." The size of Iran, they said, "is many times bigger than the land of France, and the population of Iran is half the size of populations of France." Yet, France is exporting its primary products "while the nation of Iran is sitting down." For Iranians, prayer leaders bitterly complained, "wheat is brought from America or now from Rumania"; they are dependent on the East and the West. In short, the nation of Iran is infected with the germ of "idleness" (bi-kari) and "laziness" (tanbali). Islam, however, renders these a "sin and a crime," for it praises "productive work" (kar-i tawliidi). In this respect, Imam 'Ali said, "Whoever possesses water and land...and remains poor, God will curse him and keep away his compassion from him." In other words, "A nation that has water and land...but...wants to [import] wheat from America is cursed." And for those who avoid hard work, they should know that the Prophet said, Allah yuhibbu al-'abd al-muhtarif, "God loves the servant who is gainfully employed." Moreover, the Prophet has been

fond of kissing the hands of laborers whose hands were covered with blisters on account of their manual work. He used to say to such people, tilka yad yuhibbuha Allah wa-Rusuluhu, "God and His Apostle love this hand."

Furthermore, both the Prophet and the First Imam denounced their lazy subjects. The latter, for instance, once encountered a group of people who were dependent on their neighbors for food. "Well," he said, "the dogs of Kufa are like that too." And he said of them, "O God! They should go out and...work." Moreover, 'Ali himself never shunned away from manual labor, even as a Caliph. He used to carry heavy buckets of water from the well and he toiled the land, sowing and reaping the harvest. Likewise, it is a known fact that "many of the gardens and date trees which still remain in the surroundings of Medina were planted by 'Ali." Indeed, his hands too, "were covered with blisters and hard skin." In a word, prayer leaders concluded, there is honor in every beneficial work. And once all Iranians who have completed high-school or obtained an academic degree stop behaving "like the Secretary-General of the United nations" and seek their future in "agriculture, factories and industry" Iran will achieve its goal of self-sufficiency.⁹⁷ It is noteworthy, that the theme of the merits of manual work as

a means of achieving self-sufficiency was particularly popular in the post-war era, when prayer leaders have made the issue of reconstruction the order of the day. Naturally, the government myth of the Prophet and the First Imam was once again drawn upon in order to show the believers where their obligations lay.⁹⁸

We have seen in chapter five how the Islamic Revolution and Iran's Muslim society and leadership have been rendered in sermons an illustrious reenactment of, and in some respects a greater achievement than, the government myth of the Prophet Muhammad and the First Imam 'Ali. We have also seen in this chapter how the Islamic regime has equated the opposition with the munafigun of early Islam, and how it claimed to have successfully reenacted the Prophet's and 'Ali's course of action against them. It appears, then, that the Islamic regime has set forth a new "sacred event," a myth by its own merit, which is, by definition, exemplary and worthy of emulation by all Muslims, regardless of their origin and nationality. Indeed, the Islamic regime has claimed precisely that, as will be seen in chapter seven.

However, the discussion thus far may also suggest that the Islamic regime's pretenses of reenacting the

government myth were somewhat exaggerated or, at best, premature. No doubt, the thread that runs throughout the sermons examined in this chapter is the incompatibility of contemporary Iranian society with society at the advent of Islam, and the still unaccomplished task of reenacting all exemplary precedents set by the latter. In this respect, the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran is still grappling with unresolved social and economic problems is indicative of its shortcomings in reenacting, let alone, superseding, the government myth of early Islam. For, a true reenactment also means to carry out the social and economic programs of the Prophet and 'Ali. These programs, according to the Islamic regime itself, are the proved panacea for all ills in society. It follows, then, that as long as Iran should face mounting and unresolved problems, it would be unable to proclaim a full-fledged reenactment of the Prophet's and 'Ali's government myth.

Notes to Chapter Six

1. The title "Governing in the Mold of 'Ali and Muhammad," was taken from M. Fischer, Iran, p. 216.
2. November 9, 1979, Khutbah, vol. 1, pp. 129-130. Also see, Ardebili, January 15, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 192-193.
3. January 25, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 15.
4. In July 1981 Rafsanjani was already willing to admit that the "purification" campaign against the supporters of the Shah has been successful. Indeed, he noted, even "if all the police forces of the world were to assemble [here] in order to...filter (filtir kardan) society," they would not accomplish what we have today." See, July 17, 1981, ibid., pp. 305-306.
5. Menashri, Iran, p. 11.
6. July 24, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 316.
7. May 7, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 403.
8. Rafsanjani, October 2, 1981, ibid., p. 14.
9. Fr. Buhl, "Munafikun," The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st edition.
10. Ibid..
11. Maxime Rodinson, Mohammed, trans. from the French by Anne Carter (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 184.
12. See Taleqani, August 31, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 40-41 (on "renegade" Savaks); Khameneh'i, June 27, 1980 ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 205-206 (on the Fada'iyan-i Khalq); Khameneh'i, June 19, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 256-258 (on the "National Front"); and Mahdavi-Kani, Ittila'at, May 7, 1983 (on the Tudeh party). On the Mujahidin-i Khalq as Munafiqun-i Khalq see below.
13. October 10, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 338.
14. Khameneh'i, April 10, 1981, ibid., vol. 3, p. 164.

15. April 24, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 181.
16. Taleqani, August 31, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, p. 40.
17. Khameneh'i, April 24, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. p. 179.
Also see, Rafsanjani, July 10, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 294.
18. May 8, 1981, ibid., pp. 201-202.
19. May 1, 1981, ibid., pp. 189-190.
20. W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman (London, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 221.
21. August 31, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 40-41. For similar expressions see, Montazeri, September 1979, ibid., P. 74; Khameneh'i, July 4, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 213; Khameneh'i, October 10, 1980, ibid., pp. 337-339.
22. October 12, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, p. 96. Also see, Khameneh'i, October 10, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 343. References to the modern munafiqun as "fifth columns" were especially common during the Iran-Iraq War, as will be seen below.
23. Menashri, Iran, p. 143.
24. Ibid., p. 144.
25. June 27, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 205.
26. In his book on the Mujahidin-i Khalq, Abrahamian observes that in the pre-crackdown period, Khomeini himself was still unwilling to equate the organization with the munafiqun in a direct fashion. Abrahamian discusses a sermon entitled, "The Munafiqun are more dangerous than the infidels," delivered by Khomeini in June 1980. In the sermon, Abrahamian writes, Khomeini "avoided the hallowed word Mujahidin," yet he did warn "the public to be vigilant against those who smear the 'ulama' as 'reactionary'; use the pen as others wield the club; and under the guise of defending Islam undermine Islam, just as the hypocrites in Medina had double-crossed the Prophet. See, Ervand Abrahamian, The Iranian Mojahedin (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 210.

27. See, for instance, Khameneh'i, September 19, 1980, ibid., p. 313; Khameneh'i, December 26, 1980, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 37-39; Khameneh'i, March 13, 1981, ibid., pp. 127-129; and Khameneh'i, April 10, 1981, ibid., pp. 163-166.
28. April 24, 1981, ibid., pp. 179-180.
29. May 1, 1981, ibid., p. 188.
30. May 8, 1981, ibid., p. 200.
31. May 1, 1981, ibid., p. 188.
32. Khameneh'i, June 19, 1981, ibid., p. 258.
33. Khameneh'i, June 26, 1981, ibid., pp. 264-265.
34. July 3, 1981, ibid., pp. 275-285.
35. Khameneh'i, June 26, 1981, ibid., pp. 264-265. Also see, Rafsanjani, July 10, 1981, ibid., pp. 293-295.
36. Rafsanjani, September 4, 1981, ibid., pp. 383-387.
37. Rafsanjani, August 14, 1981, ibid., p. 353.
38. August 21, 1981, ibid., pp. 361-367.
39. Khameneh'i, April 10, 1981, ibid., p. 165.
40. July 10, 1981, ibid., pp. 293-294.
41. Khameneh'i, September 19, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 313. Also see, Khameneh'i, October 10, 1981, ibid., pp. 343-344; and, Khameneh'i, March 13, 1981, ibid., vol. 3, pp. 128-129.
42. October 9, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 32-34. Also see, Rafsanjani, October 16, 1981, ibid., pp. 39-45.
43. March 19, 1982, ibid., pp. 304-306.
44. Menashri, Iran, p. 238.
45. Some isolated equations of specific individuals and groupings with the munafiqun have been made, however, in the aftermath of the crackdown. For instance, during 1983 it was claimed that the crimes of the Tudeh party are greater than those of the munafiqun, and that Bani-Sadr

was able to win the presidential elections due to his "munafiq-like face." See, Mahdavi-Kani, Ittila'at, May 7, 1983, and Fakher al-Din Hejazi, before sermon, Ittila'at, July 23, 1983, respectively. In a similar fashion, Rafsanjani equated (September 1984) the monarchists with the munafiqun, alleging that "they claim to be nationalists, but...they operate against the nation." Likewise, he termed the Fada'iyān-i Khalq and other "left-wing groups" munafiqun, because they "positioned themselves in the service of the mustakbarin, while their slogans are the slogans of defending the dispossessed (mahrumin)...and the workers." See, Ittila'at, September 29, 1984.

46. Watt, Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman, p. 167.

47. Khameneh'i, May 1, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 190. For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, December 26, 1980, ibid., pp. 37-39.

48. Ittila'at, April 4, 1987.

49. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, July 2, 1988. For similar expressions, see Rafsanjani, May 7, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 405-406.

50. Watt, p. 221.

51. Ittila'at, September 29, 1984.

52. October 26, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 109-111.

53. May 9, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 141-143.

54. Khameneh'i is referring here to the proceedings of the council of war which the Prophet summoned upon hearing of the Meccans' advance toward Medina. The Medinan notable Ibn Ubayy, together with other senior men, was of the opinion that the Muslims should give a battle from behind the fortifications of Medina. Younger men, however, "argued that to allow the Meccan army to lay waste in the fields as it was doing would make them seem cowards and ruin their reputation in the eyes of the nomadic tribes; so they must go out to the enemy." Finally, Muhammad decided on this latter course, and while arriving to the battlefield, Ibn Ubayy, still advocating his defensive tactics, withdrew with a third of the men. See, W. Watt, Muhammad at Medina (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 371ff.

55. Khameneh'i is referring here to the events of the battle of Uhud, when the Prophet ordered his force of archers to guard the exposed left flank of the battlefield, lest the enemy attack the Muslims from the rear. As victory was almost within the Muslim army's grasp, however, there was a sudden reversal of fortune, as the archers left their posts to seize their share in the spoils of war, hence opening the rear to the enemy and allowing them to attack from behind. As a result, the Muslims were put to flight and the enemy slew many of them. See, ibid..

56. See, Montazeri, September 14, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 53-54; Khameneh'i, January 25, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 14-15; and Hojjat al-Islam Qorban 'Ali Najaf-Abadi, before sermon, Ittila'at, November 23, 1985.

57. Montazeri, December 21, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 187-188. For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, August 1, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 248-249; Khameneh'i, February 20, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 105-107; and Khameneh'i, June 12, 1981, ibid., pp. 242-244.

58. Montazeri, October 12, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, p. 96.

59. Montazeri, October 5, 1979, ibid., pp. 87-88.

60. see, Taleqani, September 7, 1979, ibid., pp. 50-52; Montazeri, November 16, 1979, ibid., p. 140; and Khameneh'i, February 15, 1980, ibid., pp. 39-40.

61. April 9, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 369.

62. Khameneh'i, February 1, 1980, ibid., vol. 4, pp. 25-26. For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, August 1, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 246-250; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, September 3, 1983.

63. On the opposition to the contents of the 1979 Constitution see, Menashri, Iran, pp. 118-119.

64. Montazeri, October 26, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 111-112. For similar expressions see, Montazeri, November 16, 1979, ibid., p. 140; Montazeri, December 21, 1979, ibid., pp. 187-188; and Khameneh'i, May 29, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 226-227.

65. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, December 29, 1984. For similar

expressions see, Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, May 28, 1983.

66. Ardebili, April 9, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 349.

67. Khameneh'i, February 1, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 23. For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, August 1, 1980, ibid., pp. 246-250; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, September 3, 1983.

68. April 9, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 349.

69. Roger Savory, "Ex Oriente Nebula: An Inquiry into the Nature of Khomeini's Ideology," in Peter J. Chelkowski and Robert J. Pranger (eds.), Ideology and Power in the Middle East (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1988), pp. 354-355 [hereafter, Khomeini's Ideology].

70. Khameneh'i, March 7, 1980, Khutbah., Vol. 2, pp. 57-60. For similar expressions see, Khameneh'i, March 13, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 127-129; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, August 28, 1984.

71. Menashri, Iran, p. 278.

72. October 12, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 96-97. Also see, Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, April 9, 1983.

73. November 23, 1979, ibid., p. 153. For similar expressions see, Montazeri, November 16, 1979, ibid., pp. 143-144; Khameneh'i, September 26, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 321; Khameneh'i, April 17, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 176; Rafsanjani, March 26, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 316; Rafsanjani, Kayhan, August 21, 1982; Rafsanjani, Kayhan, September 4, 1982; Rafsanjani, Kayhan, September 18, 1982; Rafsanjani, Kayhan, October 23, 1982; Imami-Kashani, Ittila'at, May 4, 1985; and, Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini, before sermon, Ittila'at, April 9, 1989.

74. Menashri, Iran, p. 278.

75. Referring to corruption in the state apparatus in Islamic Iran, Kazemi writes, "Bribery is assumed to be a routine way to get results in bureaucracies. Corruption was perceived to be a pervasive feature in Iranian politics before and during the Pahlavi era. There is the widespread feeling that while high level official bribery may have declined since the revolution, corruption continues to remain a prominent aspect of Iranian political life. See Kazemi, p. 20.

76. Ittala'at, June 25, 1983. Also see, Imami-Kashani, March 12, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 293-294; and Khameneh'i, Ittala'at, March 29, 1986.

77. Rafsanjani's sermons on Islamic economics echo in many respects themes presented by previous Shi'i writers on the subject, most notably Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Sadr (d. 1980), Taleqani and Bani-Sadr. Baqir Sadr's Iqtisaduna (Our Economics, 1971), Taleqani's Islam va-Milkiyat (Islam and Property, 1965), Bani-Sadr's Iqtisad-i Tawhidi (The Economics of Divine Harmony, 1978), as well as Rafsanjani's sermons, sought to show that Islam was a religion committed to social justice, the equitable distribution of wealth and the cause of the mustaz'afin. They claimed that in Islam all property belonged to God; that God has made available sufficient resources to provide for the well being of all mankind; and that all had the right to a share in these resources. Also, they all displayed a degree of hostility to great wealth. Furthermore, their efforts to demonstrate that Shi'i Islam does contain a just economic system seems to be a reaction against the move of Muslim intellectuals toward Western liberal or communist ideologies. Finally, the sources and citations used by Rafsanjani in his lectures on Islamic economics are also similar to those of previous Shi'i writers on the subject. The following observation by Homa Katouzian also applies to Rafsanjani: "The sources and citations of Shi'i Islamic economics consist of a mixture of Qur'anic verses, quotations from Traditions and classical theological interpretations....There being no theoretical framework, no major historical experience, no clear social context, and no systematic method, existing writings on the subject tend to combine abstract norms and values with assertions on what will happen once the system is put into operation, interspersed with rather haphazard discussion of property, production, distribution, trade and so on." See, Homa Katouzian, "Shi'ism and Islamic economics: Sadr and Bani-Sadr," in Keddie (ed.), Religion and Politics in Iran, pp. 147-148. On Shi'i Islamic economics see, ibid., pp. 145-165; Shaul Bakhash, "Islam and Social Justice in Iran," in Kramer (ed.), Shi'ism, Resistance and Revolution, pp. 95-117; and Bakhash, The Reign of the Ayatollahs, pp. 167-194. For an English translation of Taleqani's Islam va-Milkiyat see, Taleqani, Society and Economics in Islam, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1982).

78. February 19, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 250-256.

79. March 5, 1982, ibid., pp. 273-281. Also see, Rafsanjani, April 2, 1982, ibid., pp. 330-331, 336.
80. Fischer, Iran, p. 147.
81. Montazeri, November 9, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. pp. 132-133.
82. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, December 17, 1983.
83. Montazeri, November 2, 1979; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 14, 1984.
84. For similar remarks see, Khameneh'i, May 30, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 167; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, May 28, 1983; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, March 3, 1984; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, March 6, 1985.
85. October 26, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 111-112.
86. Imami-Kashani, February 26, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 266.
87. Ardebili, January 15, 1982, ibid., pp. 190-191. For similar expressions, see, Khameneh'i, March 27, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 146-148; Ardebili, April 9, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 346-349; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, September 3, 1983; and Ardebili, Ittila'at, May 5, 1988.
88. Khameneh'i, March 27, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 146.
89. Amini, before sermon, Ittila'at, January 19, 1985.
90. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, December 29, 1984.
91. Amini, before sermon, Ittila'at, January 5, 1985. Also see, Imami-Kashani, February 26, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 265-266.
92. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, December 29, 1984.
93. Hojjat al-Islam Moqtadi, before sermon, Ittila'at, February 20, 1988.
94. Ittila'at, March 3, 1984.
95. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, May 28, 1983. Also see, Khameneh'i, June 12, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, pp. 244-246.

96. February 26, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 263-264. For similar expressions see, Montazeri, November 2, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 119-120.

97. See, Montazeri, January 4, 1980, ibid., pp. 202-203; Rafsanjani, January 22, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 200-207; Rafsanjani, January 29, 1982, ibid., pp. 211-212; Rafsanjani, March 5, 1982, ibid., p. 273; Rafsanjani, April 30 1982, ibid., pp. 394-395; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, January 2, 1988.

98. See, for instance, Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, January 7, 1989; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, February 18, 1989; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, April 22, 1989; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, May 27, 1989; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, July 1, 1989; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, September 30, 1989.

Chapter VII:
THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AS A "SACRED EVENT"

A. Introduction

Exporting (sudur) the Islamic Revolution beyond the borders of Iran is one of the chief pillars of the revolutionary ideology and, to many of Khomeini's supporters, the principal goal of Iran's foreign policy. In his classic work, The Anatomy of Revolution, Crane Brinton shows that revolutions "as gospels, as forms of religion...are all universalist in aspiration."¹ This proposition also holds true for the more recent example of the Iranian revolution. In the clerical regime's view, the revolutionary Islamic message is not confined to Iranian territory; Iran has a special duty to propagate its message to both Muslim and other "oppressed" societies (if not to humanity at large). And this message is aimed at achieving two interrelated objectives: to mobilize the revolutionary fervor of the masses abroad in order to attempt to overthrow their respective governments and to establish Islamic republics similar to that in Iran; and,

as a consequence, to bring about, under Iranian leadership, Islamic unity so as to enable Islam to play its ordained role in human history. In this respect, the notion of exporting the revolution rests on the self-asserted claim that the Islamic Revolution serves as a model for other peoples, and that Iran's global Islamic leadership will restore the grandeur and superiority of Islam, after it has been humiliated by the infidels, by dar al-harb, for centuries.

This self-proclaimed exemplary role of the revolution, extending far beyond the borders of Iran, is only a natural outcome of the Islamic regime's pretensions as examined in chapters five and six. We saw in both chapters how the regime displayed the Islamic revolution and Iran's "new" society and political leadership as an inclusive reenactment of, and in some instances a greater achievement than, the government myth of the dawn of Islam. In other words, Iran's clerical regime implied that it has laid the foundations to a new "sacred event" which is exemplary and a paradigm for how things should be done ever after. For this reason, all Muslim societies should take Iran as a model and reenact its "sacred event" (the Islamic Revolution), for it is the only means of restoring to Islam its vital force after it has receded in time from

its origin, and consequently lost its strength and decayed. In a word, the Iranian revolution has become a myth by its own merit -- a myth that reveals a "sacred event" of "contemporary time," as distinguished from Eliade's "primordial time."

It may therefore be argued that by exporting the revolution the Islamic regime is seeking to help other societies to reenact the "myth" of contemporary Iran, the "sacred event" that has taken place through the agency of a "Supernatural Being," Imam Khomeini. Yet, in Iran's view, exporting the revolution is not simply a necessity that has arisen due to the exemplary attributes of the Islamic Revolution. The reenactment of this contemporary "myth" by other societies is not only an end in itself. It is also a means of bringing about the return of the Hidden Imam from occultation; an act that is designed to hasten the appearance of the promised Mahdi in order to fill the earth "with justice and equity, just as now it is full of oppression and wrong."² As Ramazani writes,

The rule of the faqih during the waiting period, or before the appearance of the Mahdi, is preparatory to the ultimate establishment of 'Islamic world government' by the Mahdi. In other words, the faqih paves the way for the Mahdi's eventual creation of just and equitable government throughout the world.³

To put it differently, since in the meanwhile it is only

Iran that has truly established "the just government of God on earth," the expansion of this government on foreign soil will "pave the way for the ultimate founding of the world government by the expected Mahdi."⁴ Exporting the revolution thus becomes a pure act of "dynamic intizar," an activist expectation for the return (raj'at, or raja'h in Arabic) of the Hidden Imam (see below). The world-embracing reenactment of the Islamic Revolution will, of necessity, give rise to the hidden messianic leader of the Shi'ah; the contemporary "myth" of Iran is but an instrument for the realization of the divine promise, "We desired to be gracious to those that were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors" (28:4), contained in the eschatological myth of Shi'i Islam.

This chapter examines the notion of exporting the Islamic Revolution as a twofold means of paving the way for the return of the Hidden Imam, and of bringing about the reenactment of Iran's contemporary "sacred event" throughout the Muslim world. Section B views the notion of intizar as interpreted by the Islamic regime, the "dynamic expectation" of the Hidden Imam, which is synonymous with exporting the Islamic Revolution and with bringing about the eventual appearance of the Mahdi. Section C examines

why has Islamic Iran been endowed with the "divine obligation" to enlist recruits on foreign soil to reenact its "sacred event"; what are the prevailing circumstances in the Muslim world that have made the toppling of regional regimes such a grave necessity. Section D will then examine how the Islamic regime has set out to make the contemporary "myth" of Iran attractive to Muslim peoples abroad; how it has sought to make the Islamic Revolution the possession of Muslims beyond the borders of Iran.⁵

To sum up, the discussion which follows deals with the two final chapters (or parts) of the complete Shi'ah cosmogonic myth: the concluding chapter, incorporating the return of the Twelfth Imam, the Imam-i 'Asr (the Imam of the Period) and the Sahib al-Zaman (the Lord of the Age), from occultation and his global revolution, or, the eschatological myth of Shi'i Islam; and a "new" chapter, which comes immediately before that of the Imam's return, recently added to the cosmogonic myth by the regime itself. And the "mythological" protagonists of this "new" chapter are the revolutionary leaders and the nation of Islamic Iran, whose intervention in history has produced a contemporary "sacred event," and whose emulation by others will, no doubt, bring the eschatological myth to its

ordained realization.

B. The notion of Intizar:
From a Passive to a Dynamic Expectation
of the Hidden Imam

The Biblical myths of the future conceived and presented in an age in which man knew himself to be a weak powerless being who could survive emotionally only by relying on great transcendent powers whom he believed, or hoped, he could propitiate, told of a future victory of man thanks to divine help, succor, or other favorable intervention. Men who tried to secure their future without God's help, or even against His will, perished or were utterly defeated.....Those who relied on God...although their ship was tossed by inimical tempests, were destined to reach safely the coveted shores of their island of the future.⁶

The circumstances leading to the evolution of the eschatological myth of Shi'i Islam in the first centuries of the hijrah fit well into the above observation by Patai. I have already discussed in chapters three and four the futility of most 'Alid revolts and the persecution of the Imams by the political authorities of the day. This, as shown, drove the early Shi'i sect to submit to the powers that be, with the belief that only God, through His

"redeemer" (al-Qa'im), will, in the indefinite future, "bring true and uncorrupted guidance to all mankind, creating an adequately just social order and a world free from tyranny and wickedness."⁷ Thus, the believer considered himself a "weak powerless being," unable to change his own destiny, incapable of taking action by himself in order to change his personal predicament, and leaving his salvation to the interference of the Twelfth Imam who went into hiding in 874 to return as the expected Mahdi in the End of Time. Meanwhile, one should pray for the eventual return of the Imam, not seek the actual alteration of his miserable state in this world. "The belief in the appearance of the Hidden Imam as the Mahdi," Sachedina observes, "helped the Shi'ites to endure under unbearable situations and to hope for a just future [only] pending the return of the Mahdi."⁸ The believers were called upon to remain passive in their expectation (intizar) of the Hidden Imam; only he would usher in salvation from unjust and oppressive rule and regain the legitimate rights of the disinherited sect. In a word,

This essentially chiliastic hope for a just world order among the deprived Shi'ahs (mahrumin) was defensive in nature and grew out of the conflict between the Shi'ah minority and the Sunni majority. For Persian Shi'ahs this messianic hope was at first a shield against the Arab conquest in the seventh century. Later, in the sixteenth century, when the Safavid dynasty made Shi'ism a state

ideology...Shi'ism was still defensive in nature; it was primarily a protective mechanism against the aggression of the powerful Ottoman Empire.⁹

The emergence of Shi'i Islam as an ideology of revolution committed to action and designed to change the condition of the believers here and now (see chapter three), has inevitably rendered the passive, quietist implications of intizar null and void. The celebrated ideologue of the revolution, the late 'Ali Shari'ati (d. 1977), was first to reject in the 1960's the notion of intizar as a pretext for political passivity and acquiescence. Shari'ati accommodated his understanding of intizar to his overall conception of Shi'ism as a revolutionary creed, that encourages the believers to struggle against all manifestations of oppression. In Shari'ati's view,

There are two kinds of intizar. The negative one believes that salvation and the reign of justice will occur only with the manifestation of the Hidden Imam, that in the meantime the prevailing corruption and injustice are natural historical necessities. To oppose them is fruitless. Shari'ati condemns this attitude, and advocates a more positive, more activist belief in the Messianic expectation of the [I]mam. It is in the nature of Messianic Faith to believe in 'the comeback of the Golden Age'; in the revolution that will bring it about, and in the future reign of peace and justice. It is a progressive, future-oriented ideology, opposed to conservatism, to classicism, to traditionalism....One...has to say no to what

is, to revolt against the existing conditions. 'The expecting man is a ready man', ready to fight the final jihad which will definitely take place. For intizar is historical determinism. There will be a revolution. This movement will triumph.¹⁰

In other words, "true" intizar compels man to take an active role in advancing the return of the Hidden Imam from occultation, in drawing nearer the final redemption by the Mahdi. Oppression will be uprooted and justice rule the earth only upon the manifestation of the Imam. But in the interim, man should not sit idly by in passive expectation; on the contrary, man is capable of hastening the coming of the Mahdi by engaging in revolutionary activity designed to overthrow oppression and tyranny and to create, instead, a just social order. The Hidden Imam will not reappear on his own accord; human intervention is needed so as to pave the way for his final coming. Man needs to begin the Imam's work of overthrowing oppression and implementing universal justice in order to occasion his ultimate return and revolution.

It is noteworthy, that Shari'ati's conception of intizar was guided by the paramount role he accorded to man's free will, or, in his own words, to "the people" or "the masses" (al-nas) "as the active cause of fundamental change and development in human history."¹¹ Much like

the Islamic regime's later views on man as endowed with free will (see chapter three), Shari'ati argued that man is autonomous in regard to his social actions. He contended that "man is free to choose; the only limiting factor upon man's will is his own morality and the requirements of food, shelter, health and the biological necessities associated with these. In all other respects, man is absolutely free to make his own decisions and consequently absolutely responsible for the choices he does make."¹²

As the years progressed, Shari'ati's notion of dynamic intizar gathered substantial following in Iran. Algar, for example, informs us of some thoughts related to him in 1970 by a group of Shi'i friends in Meshed. The gist of these thoughts was that, indeed, the redemption and elevation of the oppressed will be achieved only pending the return of the Twelfth Imam. Nevertheless, "While... justice and relief are, in their plenitude, to be expected only from the renewed manifestation of the Imam, they may be partially achieved by those who desire his coming and wish, as it were, to prepare the way by anticipating the characteristics of his dominion."¹³ The role accorded to people in bringing about the eventual return of the Imam was also reverberated in 1975, by the distinguished

Iranian cleric, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i.

Discussing the expected appearance of the Mahdi, he wrote,

...by reason of inner necessity and determination, the future will see a day when human society will be replete with justice and when all will live in peace and tranquilityThe establishment of such a condition will occur through human hands but with Divine succor. And the leader of such a society, who will be the savior of man, is called...the Mahdi.¹⁴

The notion of intizar was the topic of some sermons delivered after the demise of the Shah's regime. And, much like representations of the Imams' careers (see chapters three and four), so was the definition of intizar aimed at cultivating and keeping alive the revolutionary fervor of the masses. For, here too, intizar was defined in its dynamic meaning, as revolutionary action, not the sliding into passivity, intended to pave the way for the Hidden Imam's return; as a man-initiated and carried out process designed to cleanse the earth of oppression and thereby to hasten the Mahdi's global revolution.

Khameneh'i, for instance, echoed Shari'ati's conviction that the appearance of the Imam is contingent upon the mundane action of the righteous believers. He claimed (June 1980) that all the prophets were sent in order to gradually prepare society for the ultimate

emergence of the "savior" (munajji). "From the beginning of human history," he said, "the divine prophets have come one after the other in order to bring society and humanity clos[er] to that societal ideal and that ultimate goal." Indeed, each and every prophet has brought society "closer to this destination." And, "The Vali-'i 'Asr...is the heir of all the divine Prophets who will come forth and take the final step in the creation of that divine society."¹⁵

How, then, does one go about to occasion the return of the Hidden Imam? How does one carry out his dynamic intizar? According to Rafsanjani (June 1983), intizar means to make the environment favorable for the Imam's coming. Suppose, he said, that "your child or your spouse goes away to the [war] front." After two or three months you are informed of his imminent return. "You learn that his train is approaching the station," and that he is likely to arrive home at a certain hour.

You may consider these final moments as a state of intizar. Your ears are turned to the doorbell. You arrange the house for...the coming guest, in accordance with his desire, joy and opinion. Once you are in a state of intizar, you make the conditions favorable [for the homecoming guest].¹⁶

What are the "favorable conditions" which are to be

met as a prerequisite for the return the "guest" (the Imam)? How should one arrange his own "house" (society) so as to make it habitable for the Imam Zaman? According to prayer leaders, society must approximate itself in the greatest extent possible to the conditions that will prevail pending the revolution of the Mahdi. The society of the Imam-i Zaman, Khameneh'i explained, is built on the following foundations:

First, on the elimination and eradication of the roots of oppression (zulm) and of overflowing tyranny (tughyan). That is, in the society...[of] the Vali-'i 'Asr, there must be no oppression and injustice; not only in Iran or in Muslim populated societies -- in the entire world there should be no economic oppression, no political oppression, no cultural oppression and not any kind of oppression....[E]xploitation, class divisions, discrimination, inequality, unreasonable demands, and hooliganism...must be eradicated in the world.¹⁷

Thus, making the environment favorable for the return of the Hidden Imam implies, in essence, to strive to create a just social order and to make the world free from tyranny and oppression. Indeed, this is the "true" meaning of intizar -- to "expect" the coming of the Mahdi by taking concrete action to implement at least a part of his global justice. It is therefore possible to conclude, that "intizar cannot serve as a pretext for the non-existence of jihad or struggle against oppression and injustice."¹⁸

In the view of prayer leaders, the Islamic Revolution itself has been an act of dynamic intizar along the same lines. It was a "drop of water in the vast ocean of the Mahdi,"¹⁹ because it contained "All the ingredients" of his appearance "on a small scale" (miqyas-i kuchak).²⁰ First, just as the Imam will "combat and confront all the great powers of the world [i.e., oppression], our revolution too, has stood up against all the great global powers." To put it differently, if the return of the Imam will usher in the era of global, eternal justice, "Today ...our revolution...is in the line of creating justice in the world arena."²¹ Most important, however, pending his return, the Imam of the Age will establish a "global Islamic government" (hukumat-i Jihan-i Islami). Likewise, the Islamic Revolution, through the leadership of the Vali-'i Faqih, is "laying the ground for the global government of the Mahdi."²² And, this is precisely why the Islamic Revolution has hastened the return of the Hidden Imam from occultation; it has made the environment favorable for his return. As Khameneh'i announced (June 1980),

We, the nation of Iran, have now made a revolution. Our revolution was the necessary prelude and a great step (gam-i buzurg) in the path of that goal which the Imam-i Zaman was sent...to realize. If we had not taken this

great step, surely the appearance of the Vali-'i 'Asr...would have been postponed. You, the people of Iran...[are] the cause for the advancement of the great human movement toward [its] destination in history, and the cause for hastening (tasri') the appearance of the Vali-'i 'Asr.²³

The Islamic Revolution, however, is capable of "drawing the return of the Imam-i Zaman [even] nearer (nazdiktar)."²⁴ This is to say, "The same people who made a revolution and have drawn themselves one step closer to their Imam-i Zaman, are able, once again, to take a step, and another step, and another step in bringing themselves closer to the Imam-i Zaman."²⁵ The nation of Iran should not be satisfied with "the existing state of affairs in the world" or even with "the headway which you achieved through the Islamic Revolution." Just as they had practiced intizar in order to deliver themselves from the claws of internal tyranny, they should continue to practice intizar in order to deliver the entire world from "the affairs of humanity" (kar-i insaniyat). The "affairs of humanity" are still "twisted and entangled." For instance, humanity is still the captive of the two "world-devouring" superpowers, and of other great powers. "This is one great knot in the affairs of humanity." Moreover, "materialistic culture" is still "forcibly imposed" on the people of the world." This is another "great knot." Another "knot" in the "affairs of

humanity" is "discrimination" which is "tormenting" the nations of the world. Within this context, the voice of "the mustaz'afin of Africa and Latin America, [of] millions of hungry people in Asia...millions of colored people who suffer from oppression [and] racial discrimination," is constantly stifled by the global "drunken brawls," the "hegemony-seekers" -- the "oppressors" (mustakbarin) of the East and the West.²⁶

Thus, the Iranian people are duty-bound "to open these knots"; to achieve in "the world arena" what they have achieved, through the Islamic revolution, within the borders of Iran. They have an obligation to employ their internal intizar in other regions of the world in order to cleanse them of oppression and to fill them, instead, with justice. And, as these "knots" will be opened one after the other, so will the return of Hidden Imam draw nearer:

Whatever of the perimeters of this Islamic zone [Iran] you are able...to expand and propagate in other regions, you have helped and drawn near the appearance of the Vali-['i 'Asr] to the same extent.²⁷

To sum up, through their dynamic intizar, as practiced during the 1978-79 revolution, the Iranian people have advanced one major step the promised revolution of the Mahdi and the establishment of his global government of

justice. But Iran is also qualified to further advance the return of the Imam, by extending the practice of intizar to other regions -- by spreading justice throughout the world and aiming at the liberation of all oppressed peoples from the yoke of oppressive powers. As Piscatori puts it, the Iranian people "have the responsibility to overthrow corrupt and un-Islamic regimes and to spread the Islamic message across the world."²⁸ Intizar, the dynamic expectation of the Hidden Imam, thus becomes one with the regime's efforts to export the Islamic Revolution beyond the borders of Iran; and, this intizar, or export of revolution, is what makes Iran, in Ramazani's words, a "Redeemer Nation."²⁹ Consider, for instance, Khameneh'i's following words (March 1980):

We must make effort and strive to export our revolution throughout the world....The Qur'an is not confined to the town of Mecca, it is not limited to the Quraysh infidels; it is not satisfied with...guiding the people of one town or of one country to happiness and salvation. It is for the inhabitants of the world ('alamin), for people and for humankind.... [T]he message of Islam must hasten to deliver the people wherever there is poverty, wherever there is discrimination, wherever there is oppression.³⁰

And, as Montazeri added on an earlier occasion (October, 1979):

Our goal is to enforce Islam; our goal is to enforce the programs of the Qur'an and to deliver the mustaz'afin from the hands of the mustakbarin and the zalimin.³¹

It is noteworthy, that when prayer leaders spoke of Islam and the Qur'an as "not confined" to a any particular region or locality, they were expressing their declared adherence to the universalist, supra-nationalist world view of Khomeini's ideology. Accordingly, they were voicing their outright rejection of what is commonly known as the modern international system. These issues will be dealt with later on. In the meantime, it suffices to note that this "redeeming" universal role of the Islamic Revolution (the liberation of mankind as a necessary step toward the redemption by the Mahdi), has been heralded by prayer leaders throughout the time span of the research, in spite of growing signs in later years that Iran's policy "turned out to be motivated in the main by tactical and pragmatic rather than by ideological considerations."³²

For instance, in June 1985 it was stated that, with regard to exporting the revolution worldwide, "We are still in the beginning of our march....The grain of the universal Islamic government has started from here, and we still have to strive hard until it would reach its lofty summit."³³ Likewise, Prime Minister Mir-Husayn Musavi

asserted in his February 1987 speech before the sermon, that "the movement of the revolution is part of the universal movement of the oppressed, and is indivisible from the destiny of the rest of the Muslims."³⁴ Even as late as April 1988, Khameneh'i assured his audience that "Exporting the revolution is like the glitter of the sun of which rays, whether you like it or not, brighten the entire world."³⁵ And, following the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq war Ardebili stated that, despite "rumors" to the contrary, the cease fire with Iraq means not the end of Iran's efforts to propagate the Islamic Revolution worldwide. We are still indebted, he proclaimed, to "laying the foundations to a global Islamic government."³⁶ Finally, after Khomeini's death prayer leaders have made continuous effort to assure the public of Iran's undiminished enthusiasm to maintain the "Imam's line" of exporting the revolution throughout the world. Hence, Ardebili asserted, "We are continuing the way of the Imam," and therefore Iran will continue to export the revolution "worldwide" for the deliverance of "the deprived people and the Muslims throughout the world."³⁷

It may be argued, then, that Iran's worldwide "redemptive" duty is to assist the Mahdi in "filling the world with justice and equity, just as now it is full of

oppression and wrong." It is may also be argued that the chief instrument for the realization of this goal is exporting the Islamic revolution with the intention of propelling Muslim and other "oppressed" nations to carry out analogous revolutions in their own lands. However, it seems that the effectiveness of this endeavor should stem, not so much from the regime's constancy and direct involvement, as from the simple fact that the Islamic Revolution is exemplary and a paradigm, and hence it is bound to be embraced automatically by extensive communities throughout the Muslim world.

C. Toward the Reenactment of the Contemporary "Myth"

In the Islamic regime's view, the liberation of mankind from oppression and tyranny is, thus far, the exclusive obligation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is Iran's exclusive obligation because, as a result of the Islamic Revolution, it is the only country that has truly done away with oppression, implemented comprehensive Islamic justice, and established the government of the Mahdi "on a small scale." Iran is therefore uniquely qualified to guide other peoples toward the realization of

very same goals in their own respective countries. This is "the special leadership qualifications that Iran alone enjoys as compared to all the nations of the world."³⁸ Or, to put it in the context of this study, insofar as the Islamic revolution was a reenactment of the government myth of the dawn of Islam, it has become, as it were, exemplary (a "myth"), and thus the regime is entitled to expect that other, mainly Muslim-populated states, will emulate its brand of Islamic Revolution and Islamic government. In this sense, by exporting the revolution the regime is merely intending to assist communities abroad in the reenactment of the contemporary "myth," to familiarize other societies with the exemplary attributes of the Islamic Revolution. Once this is achieved, other nations will reenact the revolution at will, and contribute their share in overthrowing oppression and, as a consequence, in advancing the global government of the Mahdi.

I will discuss the Islamic regime's views on this issue later on. What needs to be addressed first, however, is why has the Khomeini regime deemed it necessary to offer its contemporary "myth" to other, largely Muslim nations, for reenactment? I have shown above that one reason was to draw nearer the global revolution of the Mahdi -- to create, by overthrowing oppression and

instituting justice, a "favorable environment" for the return of the Hidden Imam from occultation. Yet, it seems that there is another, related reason why the regime considered the making of analogous revolutions in the Muslim world a grave necessity. I have argued in several passages of this study that the reenactment of a myth is designed to recover the perfection of the beginnings, to restore to things the vital force at work after they lost, in the duration of time, their strength and efficacy, and eventually died. Indeed, it may be recalled that Iran's successful reenactment of the Prophet's "Islamic revolution," and, later, of the government myth of early Islam, was, in many respects, an attempt to restore the vital force of Islam as it existed in the "beginnings."

Thus, it may be argued that by offering the Islamic Revolution (the contemporary "myth") for others to reenact, the regime is, in effect, continuing its march toward the restoration of Islam's early grandeur. By allowing others to reenact what has become a "myth" by its own merit, the Islamic regime is further attempting to recover the perfection of the dawn of Islam, to restore to Islam the vital force at work when it was born in seventh century Arabia. In short, by searching for new recruits to reenact the "myth" of the Islamic Revolution, the clerical

regime is seeking to nullify what Eliade calls "the primordial events" that accrued after the "cosmogony" and have made the Muslims what they are today -- weak, submissive and the instruments of greater powers. And, the novelty of this endeavor is that those recruits need not look back into mythical time and, by reenacting it, render it reversible. Mythical time has become indistinguishable from the present; for, by successfully reenacting the myth of early Islam, and hence laying the foundations to a contemporary "sacred event," Iran has made it possible for them to reenact the present, the current "myth" of the Islamic Revolution.

What, then, were these "primordial events" that have brought Islam and the Muslims to the point of near extinction? Or, alternately, how has Islam receded in time from its origin, and therefore lost its strength and decayed? What follows is the Islamic regime's analysis of this predicament.

According to Islamic Iran, the world, as it exists today, is divided into two realms: those countries and peoples who have arrogated all the worldly power to themselves in order to dominate and exploit others. These are the mustakbarin, the "oppressors." The other realm,

are the exploited masses of the world, those who lack power, termed, in Khomeini's terminology, the mustaz'afin, the "oppressed." "Translated into the outside world, the oppressor-arrogant camp consists of the two superpowers and a few other great powers. In the camp of the oppressed-downtrodden are the Muslim countries and most of the Third World."³⁹ Here, in the Islamic regime's view, are the end results of the "primordial events" which make the reenactment (export) of the Islamic Revolution a pressing necessity. A close examination of this dichotomy between mustaz'afin and mustakbarin may clarify the point.

"For the Muslims of classical times," Lewis writes, "Islam was the one true, final, and universal religion."

Ultimately all mankind would adopt it; in the meantime they must be made to recognize the supremacy of the Muslims and the sovereignty of the Muslim state. The world was divided into two -- the house of Islam (dar al-Islam), where the true faith prevailed and the Muslim caliph ruled, and the house of war (dar al-harb), where unsubjugated infidels still remained. Between the two there was perpetual and inevitable state of war, which might be interrupted by truce, but could never be ended by peace. It would only end when the whole world was brought into the house of Islam.⁴⁰

It is obvious that in the regime's dichotomized vision of the world, there exists a correspondence between dar al-Islam and dar al-harb on the one hand, and mustaz'afin and mustakbarin on the other.⁴¹ More precisely, "in

Khomeini's ideal Islamic world order there should be no room for the modern secular post-Westphalia conception of the international system....The current state system based on congeries of artificially created territorial states should ultimately disappear."⁴² The classical Islamic division of the world into dar al-Islam and dar al-harb thus remained, but the opposed terms used to denote the two realms have changed. And, the two new terms were not chosen in random. They reflect the grim conditions (brought about by the "primordial events") under which the Muslims exist, whereby dar al-Islam (the "oppressed") is dominated and exploited politically, socially and economically by dar al-harb (the "oppressors"), in contrast to the "natural" situation of Muslim supremacy and domination.

Indeed, the term mustakbarin is the tenth form of the Arabic root k-b-r, meaning to become great, to magnify, to exaggerate, to exceed (also in oppression), and other related terms which are associated with the notion of augmentation. In the Qur'an too, the term is related to the notion of amplification, restricted in the main, however, to mean those who "are big with pride" or "boastful."⁴³ The term mustaz'afin is the tenth form of the Arabic root d-'-f, literally meaning, by contrast, to

become weak, feeble or weaker, to wane, to decrease, and other synonyms which are associated with the notion of diminution. In its tenth form, the term "occurs only five times in the Qur'an (4:75, 4:99, 4:100, 4:126, and 8:26). It is rendered by Arberry as 'abased,' by Palmer as 'weak,' and by Pickthall and Dawood as 'oppressed' or 'feeble'."44 In a word, in cosequence of the "primordial events," dar al-harb has become exceedingly powerful in might, unrestrainedly dominating and exploiting the helplessly feeble dar al-Islam.

How has dar al-Islam reach such a pathetic state? What were these "primordial events" that are accountable for the Muslims' remarkable weakness vis-a-vis dar al-harb? According to the Islamic regime, the answer is simple: the "primordial events" that have brought the Muslims to where they are today are nothing but the conduct of the Muslims themselves following the "cosmogony"; their estrangement from their unity of ranks, from the oneness of the Islamic ummah. In a word, divisions among the believers have led to their weakness in the present, and hence, to their inability to successfully withstand the onslaught of dar al-harb, the mustakbarin. Consider, for example, the following words of Khameneh'i on the occasion of "Unity Week" (November 1986), explaining the reasons for the

Muslims' lack of unity in the contemporary world:

Different circumstances came into existence after the birth of Islam, with the emergence of the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids. If we see today that one billion Muslims are divided in the geographical, political and cultural spheres, it is [because] of the disunity and nifaq which [they] established in the [heart] of the great society of Islam.⁴⁵

Hence, after the "birth of Islam" ("cosmogony"), the Umayyad and 'Abbasid dynasties seized the reigns of power in the Muslim world. And, the conduct of the two dynasties (the "primordial events") explains how and why the Muslims are constituted today in this particular way, divided geographically, politically and culturally. No doubt, prayer leaders argued, if it were not for the "primordial events," for the Muslims' estrangement from the unity achieved in the "cosmogony," they might have been today the greatest "superpower" on earth, not oppressed and humiliated. As Rafsanjani explained in January 1982:

If the world of Islam had only operated on the basis of Islam and paid heed to the guidance of the most noble Prophet, it could have been today the greatest power in the world. I'm not exaggerating....[W]hen I say the greatest, perhaps some [of us] ask, 'stronger than America? Stronger than the Soviet Union too? Also stronger than China?' I say yes! We can be stronger than China, stronger than the Soviet Union, stronger than America and all of its satellites, which are Western Europe and Japan, all together...[if we would only bring about] a single global government.⁴⁶

It was for this reason that prayer leaders have continually called upon the Muslims to reunite; to eliminate the dire consequences of the "primordial events" by bringing about, once again, the only effective means of confronting dar al-harb and of restoring Islam's "natural" role of global superiority. The clerical regime's commitment to Islamic unity will be dealt with in more detail in chapter eight. Here, I will only cite one passage so as to illustrate Islamic Iran's position on the matter:

The secret of the Muslims' victory over disbelief [at the time of the Prophet] was unity of word and clinging to the rope of Allah....If this unity had not existed, surely we would not have heard anything about Islam today. History itself bears testimony to the fact that as long as the Muslims have been united...no one and no power could commit aggression against them. All the calamities began when unity grew weak.⁴⁷

We see, then, that the "primordial events" have been unfavorable to the Muslims from the very beginning, as the Muslims themselves caused a digression from the "sacred event" of unity, and thus lost the effective pillars of their ability to resist the onslaught of enemies. Fortunately for the Muslims, however, the Islamic Republic of Iran, by virtue of the Islamic Revolution and the regime's consequent policies, has laid down exemplary

schemes to undo the "primordial events" and thus restore to Islam the vital force at work as was manifested in the "cosmogony." The following is an examination of these schemes as presented by prayer leaders.

I have indicated above that the Khomeini regime has rejected the modern secular conception of the international system, and has espoused, instead, the establishment of an Islamic world order. This rejection of the existing order essentially means the rejection of the superpowers, of the mustakbarin, because, in the regime's view, they are dominating this order politically. And, this they do, as mentioned, at the expense of the suffering and deprived masses, most of whom happen to live in the "Abode of Islam."

Hence the first scheme to overcome the tragedy of Islam, as compressed in the guiding slogan of Islamic Iran's foreign policy, "Neither the East nor the West, only the Islamic Republic" (nah sharq, nah gharb, faqat Jumhuri-'i Islami). This means, in a nutshell, complete "Islamic self-reliance," complete independence from the superpowers of "the West and the East," the United States (the "Great Satan") and the Soviet Union (the "Red Satan"), together with their allies, and not merely non-

alignment or "negative equilibrium" as Mosaddeq expounded in the 1950's.⁴⁸ In short, according to the Islamic regime, there is nothing to be learned, used or gained from relations with the superpowers; Islam is therefore better off without its subservience to them, and must take action to get along on its own, even if this means complete isolation in foreign relations. In this respect, the present regime holds that the Islamic Revolution has not only put an end to internal tyranny, but also to the Shah's alliance with and subservience to the most powerful, imperialist, criminal, cruel, and ubiquitous superpower, the United States.⁴⁹ (In this sense, the Islamic Revolution was, in Ramazani's words, a "twin revolution."⁵⁰)

It is interesting to note that prayer leaders began to address Iran's course of "Islamic self-reliance," of isolation in foreign relations, in the wake of the hostages crisis, which signalled a critical deterioration in Iranian-U.S. relations.⁵¹ These addresses gathered momentum after April 7, 1980, when President Jimmy Carter announced the severance of diplomatic relations with Iran, banned most exports to that country, and called on all Western countries to do likewise. As the sermons at hand clearly show, Iran, clinging staunchly to its policy of

"Neither the East nor the West," and convinced of the justice of its cause, accepted these measures heartily.⁵² As Menashri notes, Khomeini "called on Iranians to celebrate the occasion. Huge festive gatherings were held. Television displayed a large flower arrangement with a card reading 'congratulations on cutting relations with the Great Satan'."⁵³ In later years, the frequency and scope of these addresses diminished significantly, signifying, obviously, "a gradually dawning realization that a modicum of ideological purity may have to be sacrificed in the interest of purchasing food and other necessities from the West."⁵⁴ If mentions of Iran's needlessness of the superpowers were made at all, they too mirrored a growing pragmatism, as prayer leaders have taken care to leave an opening for maintaining relations with the powers, always to the exclusion of the United States, of course.⁵⁵

Let's return to the climactic days of the hostages crisis, when Iran's foreign relations deteriorated to the point of almost total isolation. It was by and large during this period that prayer leaders depicted Iran's policy of "Islamic self-reliance" as exemplary -- a reenactment of the myth of the dawn of Islam -- and, hence, as one which should be emulated by other Muslims as

a precondition for eliminating the disastrous effects of the "primordial events." For example, on two separate occasions (November 1979, and January 1980), Montazeri hailed Islamic Iran's policy of i'timad bih-nafs, "self-reliance," and utter rejection "of the East and the West." He argued that this policy is based solely on the Qur'an 60:1, which reads, "O you who believe! Do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends: would you offer them love while they deny what has come to you of the truth, driving out the Apostle and yourselves because you believe in Allah, your Lord?" He then drew the following lesson from the verse, reiterating the "primordial events" in consequence of which the Muslim world has been branded in the present as mustaz'afin. He said: "all the afflictions of the Muslims are in this -- that they sold themselves to the infidels...[they] have made themselves weak before the infidels." At the advent of Islam (the "cosmogony"), Montazeri continued, "the Muslims were few. They were neither great in number ('iddah) nor in equipment ('uddah)." Yet, "they neither colluded with Iran nor with Byzantine." Consequently, they were able to conquer both empires by relying entirely upon themselves, upon Islam and the Qur'an.

Iran too, he claimed, waged a revolution and has

liberated itself "from the claws of the oppressors and the imperialists of America, the East and the West." The nation has proven today that "we are able ...[to] live without them, to rely upon ourselves only." Indeed, the pillars of Iran's victory were but "unity, Islamic ideology, faith in God and devotion to the Imam [Khomeini]." In other words, this "nation, which had no gun, no tank, no machine-gun, has stood up against the East and the West." In other words, Iran has reenacted the myth of early Islam and hence rendered the "primordial events" null and void. Other oppressed Muslim nations should therefore follow suit and emulate Islamic Iran's paradigmatic policy of "Neither the East nor the West":

Don't rely on the East or the West. Rely on yourselves. If you are few, but united [and] rely on Islam...surely you will gain the upper hand, because this is God's command, God's promise: 'We desired to be gracious to those that were abased in the land and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors' (28:4). This is God's promise, but provided that [you] rely on God, rely on yourselves. Don't say it is impossible or that we must collude with America or with the Soviet Union. They are all imperialists; or in the words of our leader, 'America is worse than the Soviet Union; the Soviet Union is worse than America; England...is worse than both of them'....Don't rely on them, rely on yourselves; be self-sufficient....Don't make yourselves small against the East and the West.⁵⁶

When, at last, the United States decided to break

relations with Iran and ban most exports to the country, prayer leaders continued to sanctify Iran's isolationist position in similar terms. Hence, Khameneh'i welcomed the decision, saying that it fully conforms with Iran's own policy of "putting an end to dependencies." In fact, he claimed, "self-reliance" was the Prophet's foreign policy too: "Allah only forbids you respecting those who made a war against you on account of your religion...that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust" (60:9). This, Khameneh'i said, was the Prophet's practice and, particularly, his "clear command" regarding "our political, diplomatic and economic relations with the United States of America; this is the instruction of the Qur'an." The United States has threatened Iran with "economic punishment." Nevertheless, "the nation of Iran welcomes this event," because it is "the line of our religion" to break "relations with aggressive powers." If other regional regimes are truly Muslim, they too must endorse this policy and find salvage from their shameful dependency on the "world-devouring" powers.⁵⁷

But Iran has not only confirmed that it is possible to do without the superpowers; it has also shown the Muslims how to wage a successful struggle against the mustakbarin

in the support of the mustaz'afin. And, once again, the Muslims, along with their rulers, were not required to emulate this struggle without a just cause, because it too, was exemplary -- a reenactment of a myth. Accordingly, Iran's confrontation with "American istikbar" was presented as a resumption of the prophets' mission. All divine prophets, it was said, "raised an uproar" against "global zulm" and "called on the people" to "rise up" against the "oppression of the great world-devourers." Today, it was argued, "the 'ulama' of Islam are following the most noble Prophet, and so they are setting forth to support the mustaz'afin and to knock down (kubidan) the mustakbarin."⁵⁸

Likewise, in the midst of the hostages crisis Khameneh'i announced (APRil 1980) that "We are standing up against istikbar" just like the warriors of Islam have stood up against the "superpowers" of their own time. He then informed his audience that "Upon arriving to the palace of Yazdgerd, a representative of the victorious armies of Islam was ordered to prostrate and kiss the earth before Yazdgerd." The man replied, however, "We came in order to deliver you too. We...came to tell you that no man should bow to Yazdgerd." In a like manner, Khameneh'i asserted, Iran is opposed to istikbar, "and not only to

istikbar of America -- to every istikbar, and the Qur'an tells us that you are able." Indeed, he concluded, "we had once been mustaz'af." Today, however, the nation of Iran "is resisting istikbar, and it must resist istikbar," although the United States "is showing muscle."⁵⁹

In this respect, Iran has defeated the mustakbarin on its own, without the assistance or the support of any country or regime. And, of course, this too is exemplary, a reenactment of a myth. Hence, Khameneh'i asserted (March 1981), the Islamic Republic of Iran has stood alone against "all the criminals of the world." In a similar manner,

Abraham revolted alone against the infidelity of the age (kuf-r-i zaman); Moses had only his brother by his side when he went to war against the Pharaoh's darkness; Jesus, Job, Noah...and all the prophets...had nothing but the power of faith in their confrontation against global kuf-r and tyranny."⁶⁰

But, most important, Islamic Iran's single-handed victory over global istikbar was but another indication that the Islamic Revolution has been an inclusive reenactment of the Prophet's own "Islamic Revolution." When the Prophet left Mecca, Khameneh'ia explained (February 1981), "the unbelievers never imagined that their enemy, that is, Islam and the Qur'an, will attain

such a [sweeping] success, but it has." They unanimously believed that they would be able to "eradicate this newly-planted tree [of Islam]...and annihilate this danger for once and for all." No doubt, they had every reason to believe so, for the Prophet possessed few "material means," and enjoyed little, if any, outside support. But the Qur'an says of the matter: "Allah certainly aided him, when those who disbelieved expelled him, he being the second of the two" (9:40). In other words, equipped with the power of faith and the assistance of God,

the Islam of the Prophet [remained] and has brought about a new civilization in historyHis government defeated the East and the West of the World; the empire of Rome was condemned by Islam and the...monarchy of Iran was overwhelmed by Islam -- and this line persisted throughout history 'though the unbelievers are averse' (9:32).

Also Iran has stood alone in the forefront of the battle against the United States. Yet, Iran too was victorious, because, like the Prophet, it relied on "faith" and "the hosts (junud) of Allah," and thus was never frightened of "the imposing presence of the enemy." The people of Iran have realized "that God is with us," and so they stood firm against the "Great Satan."⁶¹

Islamic Iran has therefore shown the world that the partisans of "truth" (haqq), the mustaz'afin, have always,

and will always, defeat the partisans of "falsehood" (batil), the mustakbarin, because this is "historical determinism"; it is a "fixed law" in human history, which has repeated itself several times. In order to make clear this point -- that the mustakbarin are eternally condemned to defeat -- prayer leaders have devoted lengthy portions of their sermons to depicting the base, batil characteristics of istikbar.⁶² In this respect, the most detailed analysis was offered by Rafsanjani, in a series of sermons delivered throughout the years 1987 to 1989.⁶³ Rafsanjani traced the root to the mustakbarin's exploitative efforts in their inclination "to exceed all limits," to "expand or enlarge their rational development irrationally."⁶⁴ They are overpowered by the spirit of "proliferation" (takassur), that is, "excessive seeking of material resources and means." Hence istikbar "extends its hands to the East, to the West, to countries and nations that are thousands of kilometers away." By virtue of their excessiveness, he added, the mustakbarin are "unable to carry on their lives without plundering...the...resources of the mustaz'af nations." This excessiveness, Rafsanjani said, is coupled with the mustakbarin's "pride" (ghurur) and "arrogance" (takabbur), which do not allow the them "to take others into account." That is, the mustakbarin are only interested in themselves, in their own material

well-being, even if this means "to deprive others of a decent share in material resources."⁶⁵

Yet, Rafsanjani continued, the very same characteristics are a source to the mustakbarin's inherent weakness, not strength. They are, in reality, "a paper-made tiger, the foam on the surface of the sea, a trembling tree"; they are "weak and putrefied," because they depend entirely on "materialism" and "matter," not on "merit" or "spirituality":

A materialistic spirit is a nonessential phenomenon. This is to say, it is not a part of the human essence (vujud). But the mustakbarin, because they are self-interested and people who are void of substantiality...are shaky and their composition is feeble....Although the mustakbarin are apparently powerful, they are shaky from within and they are always fearful[They live] in a palace of glass.⁶⁶

Hence, Rafsanjani concluded, the mustakbarin are distinguished by their "indurability and infirmness" (bipaydari va-bidavami); they "are short-sighted beings and their durability and constancy in the passage of time has [always] been limited and insignificant."⁶⁷

It was precisely due to these "vain" (batil) qualities -- which make the mustakbarin so "weak," "putrefied" and "infirm" -- that Khameneh'i asserted in the aftermath of the foiled U.S. rescue attempt (April 1980) that the era

of all great powers has finally come to an end. No doubt, he said, this was a divine promise: "And how many a town which was iniquitous did We demolish, and We raised up after it another people!" (21:11); and, "We cast truth (haqq) against falsehood (batil), so that it breaks its head, and lo! it vanishes" (21:18). The partisans of haqq, the mustaz'afin, are thus destined to gain a clear victory, if they would only raise their clenched fists against istikbar. The Islamic Republic of Iran had done so; now it is the turn of all other oppressed Muslim nations. Consider, he said, "the great palace of the Pharaoh which trembled against the proclamation of haqq of Moses and the Children of Israel." The Muslim nations, and, in this respect, their rulers too, should not say "we are unable to cause a great power and a great empire to surrender." The victory of haqq "has been repeated in history time and again."⁶⁸ And, approximately a decade later, Rafsanjani agreed, stating that "istikbari waves ...have always come, but they never had the strength to confront the people." Hence, "Faithful people, struggling, resisting, striving and indefatigable people," will gain a victory over "global oppression."⁶⁹

Islamic Iran's exemplary means of restoring to Islam the vital force of the beginning notwithstanding, the

predicament of Islam has worsened in the present. The "primordial events," now unfolding as "contemporary events," have continued to encroach upon Islam, making the believers more feeble, more oppressed and submissive to dar al-harb, the mustakbarin. More precisely, there are certain Muslims in the present, all of them in the position of power, who are continuing to sow divisions in the heart of the Islamic homeland. And, as if this was not enough, they have now joined the camp of the mustakbarin at will, emerging as their "lackeys," "satellites" and "hirelings," "mini-satans" by their own virtue. They are happily executing the mustakbarin's designs to further exploit the oppressed Muslim masses, and, within this context, to eliminate the only serious threat to istikbar in the region, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Revolution.

One may argue, then, that the Muslim heads of state are unwilling to undo the "primordial events" and are working, instead, to keep dar al-Islam oppressed, meek, exploited and humiliated. They are opposed to Islam, "even if they conceal themselves behind the name of Islam"; they are "opposed to the anti-imperialist movement." Accordingly, they want to maintain the Muslims under "the claws of America"; "they want to safeguard the interests

of their master in the region -- they want to reestablish the imperialist belt of America in the region."⁷⁰ They are "supportive of the imperialists, supportive of America, supportive of the world-devouring enemies, supportive of the poles of the East and the West." By the same token, they are opposed to "this revolution, which is Islamic and against oppression."⁷¹

The first indication of their betrayal of Islam and their subservience to the mustakbarin (of their determination to worsen the consequence of the "primordial events"), is found in their accommodative policy toward the the "arch-enemy of Islam," this "putrefied wound" and "dirty cancerous gland," which imperialism has planted in the "heart of the Islamic homeland" -- "the usurpist government of Israel."⁷² In fact, they have recognized the right of Israel to exist, by formulating such "satanic" initiative as the Fahd Plan (1981).⁷³ In this respect, the most treacherous Arab "reactionary" ruler was President Anwar Sadat who, by concluding peace with Israel, "took back the Sinai," but at the same time has "trampled the Arab and Islamic honor and respect of Egypt under the boots [of the]...Israeli executioner."⁷⁴ In a like manner, most Arab regimes are indifferent to the Palestinian cause, never paying heed to the cries of "our

oppressed Palestinian brothers" for help.⁷⁵ Indeed, they have left them on their own when Israeli invaded Lebanon in 1982 and, more recently, when the Palestinians embarked upon their "courageous Islamic uprising," the intifadah.⁷⁶

And, instead of mobilizing their forces in order to resist the "expansionist Zionist government," they are abiding by the direct command of the mustakbarin and are plotting to annihilate the Islamic Revolution. Hence, on the eve of the first Fez Summit, which was to discuss King Fahd's Peace Plan, Rafsanjani complained (November 1981) that the real confrontation in the past had been between "Arabs and Muslims" on the one hand, and "Israel" on the other. Now, however, it has taken the form of "imperialism, Israel and the reactionary regimes," in one camp, and "Islam," that is, "the Islamic Republic and the Islamic Revolution" in the other camp.⁷⁷ This is to say, rulers like "the treacherous Jordanian Husayn, the murderer of thousands of struggling Palestinians, and certain other Amirs and monarchs of the Arab region," are directing their weapons against the Islamic Republic which has "laid down the greatest blow on global istikbar, America, and on international Zionism."⁷⁸

The enthusiasm of Arab regimes to serve the vile interests of the powers is also reflected in their efforts to sow divisions among Muslims; to prevent the emergence of a united Muslim front, able to resist the onslaught of the mustakbarin. Again, the Islamic regime's commitment of Islamic unity will be discussed in detail in chapter eight. I will therefore note only, along with Rafsanjani, that Arab regimes, those "unworthy... governments...satellites, parrots which declaim the words of their masters...and fasid circles which are in this region," are working to "cast the Muslims against each other's throats."⁷⁹ Or, according to Khameneh'i, the Arab heads of State "have hatched the egg of disunity in Muslim society," and are thus doing the work of "imperialism" which has always sought to divide the "Muslim homeland" in order to facilitate their own economic and political domination in the area.⁸⁰

Finally, the Arab rulers have established non-Islamic regimes which are committed to exploiting their own oppressed peoples. Hence, like the Pharaoh, they justify their "rule on nothing but possessions, wealth and noble descent"; "they consider their position, which was attained by virtue of money, power and force, as inherent and divine." Accordingly, they deny that obedience belongs

to God only, and through God, to those who are "just," "virtuous," "aware [of the requirements of] the time," "skillful," "courageous," and, of course, "devout." More precisely, they deny the right of the faqih to the leadership of the community.⁸¹ And, through their illegitimate, un-Islamic regimes, they "commit oppression, injustice and despotism," "behave harshly toward the people," and are therefore repeating "That role which Muhammad Reza used to play in Iran."⁸²

No doubt, here, according to the Islamic regime, lies the primary cause for exporting Iran's revolutionary message -- for inducing other Muslim peoples to topple treacherous regimes by reenacting the contemporary "myth" of Iran. If the Muslim heads of state cannot, or unwilling, to amend their own ways, to nullify the "primordial events" on their own accord, they need to be disposed of by the very peoples whom they oppress and exploit for the benefit of istikbar. The question remains, however, how has the Islamic regime sought to make the Islamic Revolution (the contemporary "myth") the possession of other Muslim nations? By what means has it set out to export the Islamic Revolution beyond the borders of Iran?

D. The Propagation of the Contemporary
"Myth" on Foreign Soil

Most scholars specializing in the foreign policy of Iran agree that, although "Both the acrimonious rhetoric of Iran and the overreaction of its opponents have made it difficult to distinguish revolutionary hyperbole from reality,"⁸³ the Islamic regime has been opposed -- at least on the declarative level -- to exporting the revolution by means of force. And they cite as the reason for this, the Shi'ah theory of war and peace which prohibits the faithful to wage an offensive war. As Hunter writes, "The reluctance to export the revolution by force of arms has deep roots in the Shi'ah theory of war and peace, which holds that wars to spread Islam can only be waged by the Imams. And since the Shi'ah world has been without an Imam since the Twelfth Imam was occluded, no expansionist wars can be waged."⁸⁴ Accordingly, most scholars contend that, with the single exception of Iraq (see chapter eight), the clerical regime has been verbally committed to exporting the revolution by peaceful means, most notably, by supporting liberation movements abroad and, especially, by disseminating the Islamic ideas and

values of the revolution through various channels such as Iranian embassies abroad and the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).⁸⁵

The Islamic regime's views on war and peace will be discussed in chapter eight, dealing, *inter alia*, with representations of the Iran-Iraq War. It should be noted here, however, that, if we take Iran's statements on this matter at face value, the Shi'ah theory of war and peace has, indeed, stopped the regime short of employing coercive means in its efforts to export the revolution. This, however, was only one incentive for the regime's proclaimed resolve to use peaceful means. The other and, in my view, not less important incentive, was the implicit claim that, since the revolution emerged as a "sacred event" worthy of emulation, there is no need to impose it on others by force; the exemplary attributes of the revolution would ensure a voluntary and universal acceptance of the contemporary "myth."

Statements to this effect have been made throughout the first decade of the revolution.⁸⁶ For instance, even as early as September-November 1979, a period characterized by intense revolutionary fervor and radical rhetoric, Montazeri, in a series of successive sermons,

took pains to assure the regimes of neighboring countries (especially those along the Persian Gulf littoral and the Arabian peninsula), that Iran will not interfere in their internal affairs. It is true, he expressed his hope "that this Islamic Revolution, which is in Iran, will be thoroughly exported to other Islamic countries."⁸⁷ He also announced that the struggle against oppression or the defense of Islam "has no limits or boundaries,"⁸⁸ and that "our goal has not been the issue of Iran only."⁸⁹ Moreover, he warned Iraqi President Saddam Husayn, with whom the Iranian regime was already entangled in a fierce propaganda warfare,⁹⁰ that "should the leader of the revolution issue a command, the small and big of Iran are able to conquer...the countries which seek to operate against Iran."⁹¹ Finally, he called upon "the Muslim people of the world" to "awaken" and to overthrow their tyrannical regimes.⁹²

Nevertheless, in the same sermons Montazeri was always careful to qualify his ominous threats. He repeatedly stated that "The revolution of Iran was not a revolution of waters and territory" or a "territorial revolution" (inqilab-i zamini), and that "interference in the affairs of other countries" is not the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Montazeri said: "I assure all of our

Arab brothers...on behalf of the government of Iran...that the nation of Iran does not want one inch of your territory; it has no desire for your territory."⁹³ And he added, "we have no intention to commit aggression against or to encroach upon any country -- we don't want Bahrain, we don't want Kuwait, we don't want Iraq."⁹⁴

How then has Montazeri defined the meaning of exporting the revolution? In this early stage, exporting of revolution, as explained by the latter, meant to "admonish" others, to "enjoin good and forbid evil" verbally. The Qur'an, Montazeri said, explicitly commands, "Enjoin on each other good and enjoin on each other patience" (103:3). It does not command, "enjoin on each other good within the borders of Iran, not beyond Iran (la fi-al-kharij al-Iran)." The Qur'an also states, "And as for the believing men and the believing women, they are the guardians of each other; they enjoin good and forbid evil" (9:71). Indeed, Montazeri continued, "the name of Iran is not [mentioned] there, but all the believing men, Iranian or non-Iranian, and all the believing women and ladies." In other words, all Muslims are entrusted with the duty of pointing out each other's faults and "evil doings." They must ask each other,

Why did you commit evil? Why did you sin? Why

haven't you carried out your obligation? Why aren't you defending hagg? All of us can ask this 'why'. This is the right which the Qur'an has granted [us]; it is not confined to IranThere is no interference in the affairs of other countries in this. We do not covet the seas and the lands of other countries.⁹⁵

Yet, in Montazeri's view, to "admonish" and to "enjoin good and forbid evil" did not simply mean to point out the faults of others. More than anything else, it meant to follow the examples set forth by the Islamic Revolution, to draw the necessary lessons from the contemporary "sacred event" and to amend one's ways accordingly. Thus, in this examined period of September-November 1979, Montazeri has time and again sought to "admonish" Arab regimes "in a friendly manner" to "take a lesson from this situation which had come to pass on the government of Iran." Like the present Iranian regime, "return to the lap of Islam, do not commit oppression, injustice and [do not rule] despotically." Otherwise, your people will settle their accounts with you, just as "the nation of Iran had settled their accounts with the [Shah] with bear hands."⁹⁶ Or,

Rulers in the Muslim countries! It is impossible to maintain yourselves by means of exerting pressure on the people. Come, draw a lesson. The crime of Muhammad Reza Pahlavi was despotism, dictatorship and trampling underfoot the commands of Islam....[Like the deposed Shah] you cannot continue to rule for always at

the bayonet point. The bayonet point is always a short-lived movement....Make peace with Islam, make peace with the Qur'an.⁹⁷

In a word, exporting the revolution does not necessitate the use of coercive force. If the Arab regimes would only familiarize themselves, through Iran's "admonishments," with the exemplary values of the contemporary "myth" and accept them, this may be tantamount to a successful exportation of the revolution. There would even be no need for their people to reenact the Islamic Revolution in practice. Indeed, it is implied that by embracing the exemplary values of the revolution at their own free will, the Arab heads of state may avoid the Shah's fate.

Clarifying the means of exporting the revolution in later months, prayer leaders have equally pointed to Iran's non-aggressive designs. It is true, they asserted that the objective of exporting the revolution was to bring about the overthrow of oppressive regimes by their subjects. Hence, they have more or less given up their hope that violent revolutions may be avoided abroad by allowing foreign rulers to adopt the exemplary values of Iran's revolution. Yet, they made it equally clear that exporting the revolution should not be carried out by force; that it means "to communicate our message,"⁹⁸ to make Iran's exemplary "sacred event" known to the

"oppressed nations," so as to enable them to reenact it on their own accord. Consider, for instance, the following words of Khameneh'i (February 1980):

[O]ur responsibility is to guide humanity. The responsibility of this nation is to show the world that, through self-sacrifices, it is possible to make a revolution, that it is possible to overthrow oppression, that it is possible to build a just society with Islam, with a bond to religion."⁹⁹

And he added in March 1980:

Our revolution is not exported with the sword; we have no such pretensions. We are empty-handed when it comes to modern technology... that the West and the East, the superpowers and [other] powers possess. We don't have [a sufficient] quantity of weapons to confront them; even if we had, we prefer not to use firearms. We don't [want] to set the world ablaze....We oppose war....The exporting of our revolution is not with the sword; the exporting of our revolution is with elucidation (bayan), with a message (payam), with the revival of motivations and sentiments....We must talk to all people who are gazing at our revolution and don't know how is it that this revolution gained a victory, and to let them understand that the Islamic Revolution...gained a victory through the power of unity, through the power of Islam, through the reliance on God, through the power of the will, through yielding to self-sacrifice and through effort in the way of God (mujahadat). We must...make the experience of our revolution the possession of other nations.¹⁰⁰

The December 1981 Shi'ah (some allege, Iranian-sponsored) coup attempt in Bahrain revived the Gulf regimes' fears of Iran's interventionist, subversive

designs. "The discovery of the coup plot in Bahrain," Ramazani observes, "sent shock waves through the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] states."¹⁰¹ For Iran, however, the coup plot afforded yet another opportunity to insist that the exemplary nature of the revolution does not require its exportation by force. Hence, in the wake of the plot's discovery Rafsanjani hastened to pacify the Gulf heads of state, assuring them that Iran does not wish to forcibly impose its own brand of Islamic regime on their countries.¹⁰² In a like manner, Imami-Kashani denied allegations that "Iran wants to interfere in the affairs of [other] countries" and explained why it does not deem it necessary to do so: "the Islamic Revolution of Iran is such," he said, "that...when it has shown itself, the world of the dispossessed will heartily accept it on its own accord."¹⁰³ In other words, inasmuch as the Islamic Revolution has become an exemplary "myth" in the contemporary world, there is really no need to force it on other peoples; as a "sacred event," it will, ipso facto, be emulated by others.

Statements of this type were repeatedly made in all subsequent periods. For example, in December 1982 Khameneh'i called on all "oppressed and Muslim nations" to "follow the example" of Iran and "revolt" against the

taghuts.¹⁰⁴ Again, the emphasis was on the emulation or the reenactment of the Islamic Revolution, not on Iran's physical intervention. Likewise, in later years prayer leaders have continually stressed that Iran has never interfered and will never interfere in the affairs of other countries, because "the exportation of the revolution is not an issue which requires a bomb or a sword." By its very nature, they said, the revolution is bound to reach "other regions of the world...where people will rise up in revolt...with an Islamic motive."¹⁰⁵

The role the Iranian regime has accorded the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) in promoting the Islamic Revolution abroad, is also indicative of Iran's perception of the revolution as an exemplary "sacred event" to which foreign communities will be attracted at their own free will. The Saudi-Iranian dispute over the meaning and goals of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca -- a dispute which has regularly brought tensions between the two countries to a head and, consequently, to the death of approximately four hundred Iranian pilgrims in July 1987 -- is beyond the purport of this study.¹⁰⁶ It should be noted here, however, that, from the Iranian perspective, "the annual Iranian pilgrimage provides a unique opportunity for propagating Khomeini's brand of Islamic

fundamentalism."¹⁰⁷ In view of the fact that the regime regards the Hajj as an "international Islamic gathering," a "global congress" of Islam, and the gathering place of Muslims "from every corner of the world,"¹⁰⁸ it is no wonder why it has been considered such a valuable channel of disseminating the revolutionary message.

The dissemination of the message from "the international pulpit" of the Hajj, however, is largely intended to familiarize Muslims with the paradigmatic features of the contemporary "myth," so as to enable them to reenact it independently in their own respective countries. On the eve of the Hajj in 1980, for example, Khameneh'i described the "Islamic duties" of leaving Iranian pilgrims. Within this context, he narrated a hadith in the Arabic language, attributed to the Eighth Imam, 'Ali al-Riza, and then offered his own, typically liberal, translation of it. According to Khameneh'i, Imam Riza stated that the objective of the Hajj is the "conveyance of the message of the Imams (naql akhbar al-a'imma)." In Khameneh'i's translation of the hadith into Persian, however, "the Imams" have turned into "leaders of religion" (pishvayan-i dini), or, in other words, the Islamic Republic of Iran. Hence, Khameneh'i observed, during the Hajj Iranians pilgrims "have the opportunity...

to convey the message of the leaders of religion." The Eighth Imam, Khameneh'i added, also said that the message should reach kull suq' wa-nahiyah, "every land and region." This means, Khameneh'i explained, that "From the grand pulpit of the Hajj, the message of the Islamic Revolution [should] reach the entire world."¹⁰⁹ Khameneh'i then turned to address leaving Iranian pilgrims directly and said:

First, let the message of the revolution...the grand Islamic Revolution of this nation, reach the world. Especially our Khuzestani brothers and sisters, whose language is Arabic too, they have a great obligation in this regard. Those who don't know Arabic, [they too are duty-bound]...to let the friends and brothers who are in other countries understand the profundity of this revolution...Tell them to sit down [and] reflect a bit on this great event in modern history, that is, the Islamic Revolution; [tell them] to consider this event: how has this great event take place? By what means has this event been carried out? Is it not possible to carry out a revolution of this magnitude, of this profundity, of this orientation in their [own] countries?....Tell them that the message of the Islamic Revolution, the essence of the Islamic revolution, can be a gift...which they will bring to their own people and nation.¹¹⁰

Once again, exporting the revolution acquired the meaning of propagating a message, and thereby, of facilitating the reenactment of the exemplary Islamic Revolution by others, without Iran's concrete and physical intervention. Or, in Khameneh'i's words (February 1981),

If the nations had only known what is the message of Islam; if they had only known that [our] Islam is for the peoples' freedom, for lifting discrimination and class divisions... and for eliminating wickedness, oppressions, inequality and prejudices -- if they had only known this, they would be eagerly attracted to Islam.¹¹¹

In short, the Islamic Revolution is simply offered as a "model (ulgu) for the entire world,"¹¹² as a "model for the dispossessed of the world,"¹¹³ as "a model for the Muslim nations"¹¹⁴; and, indeed, if they would only "take the Muslim nation of Iran as a model, all their misfortunes will be overcome."¹¹⁵

Prayer leaders' own evaluation of the successes achieved in exporting the revolution, also points to the regime's perception of the revolution as an exemplary "myth," to which foreign communities will be attracted at their own free will. For instance, throughout the first decade of the revolution prayer leaders have been particularly fond of stating that "the mustaz'afin of the world are all with us." And, the terms and adjectives they employed in order to illustrate this situation all alluded to the mustaz'afin's voluntary attachment to the revolution, or otherwise, to the exemplary, non-coercive impact of the revolution on the mustaz'afin. Hence, the oppressed nations have been "commotion-stricken (hayajan

zadah shudand) by" and have "cast their eyes upon" the revolution;¹¹⁶ they "are casting a hopeful eye upon a new deliverance-seeking force,"¹¹⁷ or "fixing their eyes upon the first blossom of Islamic revolution, that is, the regime of the Islamic Republic in Iran."¹¹⁸ In a like manner, the revolution was depicted as a "sacred spiritual breeze" that has "awakened" the oppressed,¹¹⁹ as a "lesson" which "left its impression on the soul of the nations,"¹²⁰ and as a "source of inspiration for other nations."¹²¹

References to specific cases of alleged successes in exporting the revolution, also alluded to the exemplary stimulus of the revolutionary message and, accordingly, to the voluntary recognition of its merits on foreign soil. Rafsanjani's account of his September 1981 visit to North Korea should best illustrate the point. North Korea, he said, is a country located at a "flying distance of eight and a half hours away from us"; "their language is totally different from ours [and] their religion too, has no resemblance to ours -- they are Marxists, Buddhists, Hindus or Christians." Moreover, North Korea and Iran have established no communication relations, and so it is impossible to receive broadcasts of Iranian radio in that country. More particularly, North Korea is a prime example

of a country untouched by the propaganda efforts of Iran, whether by will or due to objective circumstances.

Nonetheless, "When we arrived in the airport a huge multitude of people were gathered there....[T]hey shouted slogans and expressed their friendship to the Islamic Republic of Iran." Despite divergence in culture and language and the great distance between the two countries, "In our encounters with these people...we saw that they are attached to the Islamic Revolution from the bottom of their hearts." For instance, "We asked a laborer in a tractor factory, 'Are you familiar with our Imam?' He replied, 'Is it possible that one should not be familiar with the leader who struggles against America in the Middle East?'" Finally, the North Korean leader "is familiar with our Policy of Neither the East nor the West" and expressed his belief that this policy is "the greatest historical present...to humanity and, especially, to the imperialism-stricken region of the Middle East." It is obvious, Rafsanjani concluded, that as a result of Iran's revolution, "Islam has gained attention in places where it has never received any attention"; "What a victory for Islam!...What a victory for the revolution!...What a victory for the struggle against zulm and fasad...[in] the world!"¹²² Thus, the exemplary attributes of the

revolution have not only attracted oppressed nations, but also the people and leaders of an "atheist," Communist country who came to acknowledge the exemplary Islamic message of the revolution on their own accord.

References to other alleged successes in exporting the revolution, this time in Muslim-populated regions, conveyed the same message. Hence, following the "revolutionary execution of the Pharaoh," Egyptian President Sadat (1981), and demonstrations in Muslim countries such as Algiers, the Sudan, Morocco and Tunisia, Rafsanjani claimed that all these have emerged with "the inspiration of Iran and the Islamic Revolution of Iran." The mosques in all the above countries, he explained, "have become centers of Islamic slogans and a channel of introducing the Islam [of our brand], the way of our revolution and the symbol of our revolution, the Imam." And, "This is the path which...we have called from the beginning the export of the revolution."¹²³ Likewise, following another "revolutionary execution," that of the Lebanese President Bashir Jumayal (1982), it was stated that "The slogans of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic behavior of our people...is a formidable cause for inciting anti-istikbari, Islamic [movements]."¹²⁴ Again, there is no need for Iran to impose its revolution by

force; by its very nature the revolution is an "inspiration" for others, as well as the "slogans" and the "Islamic behavior" of the Iranian people.

Such was also the exemplary impact of the revolution on the Palestinian movement. For here too, Iran only needed to sit idly by and watch the Palestinians carry out an analogous "Islamic revolution" in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip at will. For example, following disturbances on the occasion of "Earth Day" (yawm al-ard)¹²⁵ in March 1982, Rafsanjani proclaimed the birth of a "new movement in the occupied territories." "They have as a model," he said, "the movement of the Islamic Revolution which is proven by experience." Like the Iranian people's struggle against the Shah, they too "Assemble in the squares, shout slogans, shout 'God is Great', shut down their shops... they do whatever we had done."¹²⁶ The Palestinians, Rafsanjani asserted, have struggled against Zionism since 1917, when "the cursed Balfur declared...a state or a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine." Yet, the novelty of their enterprise today is "the slogans which the Palestinians are shouting." In this sense, "their movement resembles the movement of Iran." They not only shout Islamic slogans, but also slogans in devotion to "the leadership of the Imam." The Palestinians have

finally come to realize "that the movement forged by the Imam and the way he initiated, is the proper way." No doubt, they "will choose the ideology, the method and the way of the Imam for themselves." In the past, their slogans were "the restricted slogans of nationalismBut I say that the detonator of this movement...should be Islam which will eventually lead...to an Islamic government in Palestine."¹²⁷

Similar statements have been made since December 1987, with the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising, the Intifadah. Accordingly, the Intifadah was called an "Islamic uprising" (qiyam-i Islami),¹²⁸ which is analogous to the struggle against the Shah, for it "has shown that it is possible to stand up against kufir without arms."¹²⁹ Likewise, Rafsanjani hailed (January 1988) "the Islamic movement of the Palestinian people," asserting that their "slogans...are Islamic." And, he concluded, "the Palestinians have learned the path of struggle...from us."¹³⁰

Finally, prayer leaders have argued that the exemplary power which the revolution holds over vast communities abroad largely account for the plots devised by enemies to deprive the revolution of its popular bases in other

Muslim lands. Istikbar and its regional "lackeys," they said, are aware that "this revolution...is worthy of emulation (taqlid) and...adoption (iqtibas), and is capable of being waged in many places." Hence, America and its regional "henchmen" are doing their utmost to show the people that "this type of revolution is impossible," that people are unable to "raise their hands...climb on roofs...and shout 'God is Great'...in front of machine-guns."¹³¹ They are striving, through "vile propaganda," "accusations," "false publications" and "slander," to extinguish the "sacred fire" that has been kindled "in Afghanistan, in Iraq and in the Gulf."¹³² In this respect, Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" was regarded as yet another plot to prevent the exemplary revolution from striking roots beyond the borders of Iran:

The purpose of writing the book 'The Satanic Verses,' [was] to diminish the attractiveness of the Islamic Republic and to prevent the progress and expansion of Islam in the world and, particularly, among the young generation.¹³³

And, since early 1987, the increased U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf was also presented as an "istikbari plot" to prevent the oppressed nations from emulating the exemplary Islamic Revolution. Nevertheless, this plot, like others, is doomed to failure. For, by virtue of the revolution's exemplary attributes, the

Islamic message is bound to allure populations throughout the region, whether the mustakbarin like it or not:

If their goal is to prevent the influence of the revolution in the world, they [ought] to know that the Islamic nations are more attracted to the revolution day by day. The nations are seeing the truth and they are witnessing how we are resisting the bullies of the world in order to revive the name of the Qur'an....Nothing is more attractive to the nations than this issue -- than seeing how one revolution speaks the truth and is not afraid of any threat.¹³⁴

One final issue should be considered within the context of offering, not imposing, the exemplary Islamic Revolution to other Muslim peoples. It is a known fact that "so far Iran's revolution has not been duplicated anywhere."¹³⁵ This is to say, in spite of the regime's stated conviction that the paradigmatic Islamic revolution will, of necessity, be emulated by other peoples, Iran has had little success in making its own message "the possession of other nations." The reason for Iran's apparent failure to attract external communities to the contemporary "myth" is clear. One should bear in mind that the revolution and its underlying ideology were a result of a particular Iranian, Shi'i context. Accordingly, the symbolism and mythology of the revolution were of particular Shi'i and Iranian traits, of no significance whatsoever to the largely Muslim, yet predominantly Sunni

populations outside Iran. Hence it seems that "Iranianism" "has had a greater impact if not in limiting the revolution, then at least in giving it a more particular cast and outlook."¹³⁶

Sivan argues in the Hebrew version of Radical Islam, that the Khomeini regime has tried to overcome this impediment on exporting the revolution by "accommodative considerations" -- by endeavoring to diminish the doctrinal differences between the Sunnah and the Shi'ah, and, more significant to this study, by bestowing a more universal or ecumenical meaning on the revolution's distinctive Shi'i symbols and myths.¹³⁷ This trend is hardly noticeable in sermons, however. It may be recalled (see introductory chapter), that the khutbah is basically designed to fulfill the function of revolutionary Islamic indoctrination for internal consumption. In this case, prayer leaders feel free to emphasize the unique Shi'i traits of the revolution, with no regard to "accommodative considerations." It is, by and large, through other channels, most notably publications in the Arabic language aimed at external consumption, where Islamic Iran has sought to remove all sectarian connotations from its ideology. In short, by using two layers of indoctrination, the Khomeini regime has been trying to solve the following

dilemma: "In so far as Khomeini chose to emphasize a purely Shi'i ideology, he alienated the Sunni Muslim world. But in so far as he emphasized a universal language, he weakened the appeal of his vision to Iranian Shi'ites."¹³⁸

Nevertheless, the sermons at hand do provide us with at least some insight as to how the regime has sought to remove the distinctive Shi'i features of the revolution, so as to expand its attractiveness to the Sunni world beyond. Consider the following words of Imami-Kashani (November 1985):

Islamic Iran has achieved victory through the glorious blessing of the Shi'i school of thought (mazhab) and through the devotion to the holy presence of the Imams, may peace be upon them; and fortunately, this movement has come into existence throughout the world.... Today, all over the world, when a Muslim is revolting against istikbar he says: 'Apparently I will either gain a victory or become a shahid, in which case I will also gain a victory'.¹³⁹

The Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, and particularly the Imams' part in it, is essentially an anti-Sunni myth, as it unfolds the historical injustice which was committed against the household of 'Ali by those who were later identified as the Sunnis. But when Imami-Kashani says that the Shi'i revolutionary movement in Iran has given rise to movements throughout the Muslims world, whose

members too are following in the footsteps of the Imams and offer their lives as shahids, he is, in effect, removing all anti-Sunni connotations from the myth. Indeed, the Imams are not presented as the mythological heroes of Shi'i Islam only; they are endowed with universal exemplary attributes -- applicable to both Sunnis and Shi'is -- of warriors who are indebted to struggle against all odds. In essence, Imami-Kashani is urging the Sunnis to overlook the sectarian implications of the myth, and to focus, instead, on its universal lessons -- resistance and struggle against tyrants and oppressors wherever and whoever they may be.

Within this context, also Khomeini, the "Supernatural Being" of the contemporary "myth," was displayed as an overall Islamic hero, rather than the hero of the Shi'ah sect only. Khameneh'i therefore asserted, addressing Khomeini directly, "God bestowed upon you the blessing of the affection of...millions of people. Today, you are not the leader of Iran only; the world of Islam considers you their leader." And he added, "Hearts throughout the world are pounding today for your remembrance."

Millions of people are following the Imam and his leadership. O beloved Imam!...[M]ake haste, once again...to bring...the enemy of Islam to its knees. Cut, once again, the chains of...dependencies to the East and the West with

those iron, divine scissors. We are with you; the nation is with you, and the nations of the region are with you....In Egypt...in Haifa, in the heart of Israel, young Muslims are gathering in your name. Today, a group in the occupied lands called al-Khumayniyun is engaged in struggle against Israel....You are the leader everywhere.¹⁴⁰

And, it was for this reason that in the wake of Khomeini's death Rafsanjani observed that, "The Muslims of the world regarded the Imam as their leader," and so people "in Pakistan, India, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Morocco," as well as in other Muslim countries, are all lamenting the "departure of the leader."¹⁴¹

Hence, like the twelve Imams of the Shi'ah, Khomeini was presented as a hero stripped of all sectarian qualities and possessing universal exemplary attributes. His struggle should therefore be emulated by all Muslims, and not by his Shi'i adherents only. Yet, references to Khomeini as the leader of the entire Muslim world is related to a broader theme, that of Islamic Iran's proclaimed commitment to Islamic unity and utter rejection of modern secular nationalism. Chapter eight will now examine how this commitment has been presented through appeals to certain parts of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, taking, in the main, the Iran-Iraq War as a case study.

Notes to Chapter Seven

1. Cited in Farhang Rajaee, Islamic Values and World View: Khomeyni on Man, the State and International Politics (Lanham, New York & London: University Press of America, 1983), p. 82 [hereafter, Islamic Values and World View].
2. Asaf A. A. Fyzee, A Shi'ite Creed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 98.
3. Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, p. 20.
4. Ibid.
5. The notion of exporting the revolution to Iraq which, on account of the Iran-Iraq War, was regarded by the Khomeini regime as an exceptional case, will be discussed in chapter eight.
6. Patai, pp. 86-87.
7. Sachedina, Islamic Messianism, p. 182.
8. Ibid., p. 181.
9. R. K. Ramazani, "Iran's Export of the Revolution: Politics, Ends, and Means," in John L. Esposito (ed.), The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact, p. 47 [hereafter, Iran's Export of the Revolution].
10. Bayat-Philip, "Shari'ati," pp. 161-162.
11. Shari'ati, On the Sociology of Islam p. 48.
12. Akhavi, "Shari'ati's Social Thought," p. 134. Shari'ati's arguments for free will are in fact a denunciation of the Marxist theory which, in his view, does not endow man with free choice because of its adherence to "historical determinism."
13. Algar, "Oppositional Role," p. 232.
14. 'Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, Shi'ite Islam, trans. from the Persian and edited with an introduction and notes by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 212 [emphasis added].

15. Khameneh'i, June 27, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 199-200. For similar expressions, see Rafsanjani, Kayhan, July 10, 1982; and Imami-Kashani, Ittila'at, June 21, 1986.
16. Ittila'at, June 4, 1983.
17. Khameneh'i, June 27, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, 1980, p. 200. Also see, Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, April 28, 1984.
18. Imami-Kashani, Ittila'at, March 18, 1989. It is fascinating how Imami-Kashani was still speaking of jihad and "struggle" in this post-war, post-Khomeini, "reconstruction" period.
19. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, May 19, 1984.
20. Khameneh'i, June 19, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, p. 200.
21. Khameneh'i, June 19, 1981, Ibid., p. 200..
22. Imami-Kashani, Ittila'at, June 21, 1986.
23. June 27, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 201.
24. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, May 19, 1984.
25. Khameneh'i, June 27, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 202. Also see, Mahdavi-Kani, Ittila'at, July 23, 1983.
26. Khameneh'i, June 19, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, pp. 250-251. Also see, Ayatollah Jaz'ali, Ittila'at, January 15, 1983.
27. Khameneh'i, June 27, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 202. For similar expressions, see Rafsanjani, Kayhan, July 10, 1982.
28. James P. Piscatori, Islam in a World of Nation-States (Cambridge, London & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 113 (hereafter, Nation-States) .
29. Ramazani, "Shi'ism in the Persian Gulf," p. 34. This was reprinted in Ramazani's book, Revolutionary Iran, p. 20.
30. Khameneh'i, March 28, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 86.
31. October 12, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, p. 93. Similar expressions in sermons are not lacking. See, for example,

Montazeri, September 14, 1979, ibid., pp. 54-55;
 Khameneh'i, February 29, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 53-54;
 Khameneh'i, February 27, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 110-111;
 Rafsanjani, January 8, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 186-188;
 Khameneh'i, Kayhan, December 4, 1982; Hojjat al-Islam
 Faqer, Ittala'at, February 5, 1983; Khameneh'i, Ittala'at,
 February 4, 1984; and Khameneh'i, Ittala'at, April 20,
 1985.

32. Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision," p. 53.

33. Ayatollah Jannati, before sermon, Ittala'at, June 22,
 1985.

34. Ittala'at, February 7, 1987.

35. Ittala'at, April 9, 1988.

36. Ittala'at, August 6, 1988.

37. Ittala'at, June 24, 1989. For similar expressions, see
 Rafsanjani, Ittala'at, July 1, 1989; and Ardebili,
Ittala'at, July 8, 1989.

38. R. K. Ramazani, "Khomeini's Islam in Iran's Foreign
 Policy," in Adeed Dawisha (ed.), Islam in Foreign Policy
 (Cambridge & London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.
 18.

39. Hunter, p. 37.

40. Bernard Lewis, The Middle East and the West (New York:
 Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 115.

41. See Hunter, pp. 37-38; and Rajaei, Islamic Values and
 World View, p. 78

42. Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, pp. 20-21.

43. See, for example, the Qur'an, 16:22-23; and 63:5.

44. Savory, "Khomeini's Ideology," p. 358.

45. Ittala'at, November 15, 1986.

46. January 8, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 185.

47. Muhammad Ishaq Madani (a Sunni 'ulama), before sermon,
Ittala'at, December 15, 1984. For similar expressions, see

Khameneh'i, August 8, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 257-261; Khameneh'i, January 2, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 48-49; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, January 1, 1983; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 16, 1983; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, September 15, 1984; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, November 7, 1987.

48. See, Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, pp. 21-22.

49. Islamic Iran's profound animosity toward the United States, also reflected in the term "Great Satan," has its roots in what the clerical regime regards as American unacceptable interference in Iranian internal affairs, leading, since World War II, to the destruction of Iranian culture and economy. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union, which had confidently expected to be welcomed as a natural ally by the revolutionary regime, has found itself placed in the same category of mustakbarin as the United States. Tzarist Russia's expansionist designs against Iran in the nineteenth century, and the Soviet Union's interference in Iran's internal affairs in the first half of the twentieth have largely contributed to the regime's resentment of that superpower. Finally, the occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, has led the Islamic regime to brand the Soviet Union as an imperialist power and a "Red Satan."

50. See, R. K. Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations," in R. K. Ramazani (ed.), Iran's Revolution: The Search for Consensus (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 49-50.

51. See, for example, Montazeri, November 23, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 150-151; Montazeri, January 4, 1980, ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 201-202; Khameneh'i, January 18, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 5-7; Khameneh'i, January 25, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 13-14; Khameneh'i, February 1, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 26-27; and Khameneh'i, March 14, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 70-71.

52. See, for example, Khameneh'i, April 11, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 104-105; Khameneh'i, May 2, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 131-137; Khameneh'i, January 23, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 69-71; Khameneh'i, February 6, 1981, ibid., pp. 85-89; and Khameneh'i, March 20, 1981, ibid., p. 138.

53. Menashri, Iran, pp. 152-153.

54. Savory, "Khomeini's Ideology," p. 354.

55. See, for instance, Rafsanjani, Kayhan, November 20, 1982, where he happily proclaimed Iran's complete independence from the "Soviet Union and its satellites," and from "America and its satellites." He did indicate, however, that while there are countries, such as the Soviet Union, which are "oppressive," "this means not that we should have no relations with them."

56. November 23, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 150-151; and January 4, 1980, ibid., pp. 201-202.

57. April 11, 1980, ibid., vol. 2, pp. 104-105.

58. See, for example, Khameneh'i, August 22, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 275-276; and Falsafi, Kayhan, July 10, 1982.

59. April 4, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 96-97. Also see, Khameneh'i, January 23, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 69-71.

60. March 20, 1981, ibid., p. 138.

61. February 6, 1981, ibid., pp. 85-86. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, May 22, 1981, ibid., pp. 218-219; and Khameneh'i, January 23, 1981, ibid., pp. 69-71.

62. See, for example, Khameneh'i, May 30, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 167-168; Khameneh'i, May 22, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 218-219; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 16, 1983.

63. Rafsanjani's extensive treatment of istikbar, beginning in early 1987, was not coincidental. It came at a time when the United States' decision to flag Kuwaiti ships (March 1987) and increase its military presence in the Gulf, have brought U.S.-Iranian tensions to a new climax.

64. Ittila'at, April 4, 1987. Similar expressions by Rafsanjani are found in Ittila'at, April 18, 1987; and Ittila'at, June 6, 1987.

65. Ibid., and Ittila'at, July 18, 1987. Also see, Ittila'at, October 3, 1987; Ittila'at, November 28, 1987; Ittila'at, January 30, 1988; Ittila'at, July 30, 1988; and Ittila'at, November 5, 1988. Other prayer leaders chose to focus on the similar, "monopoly-seeking" batil characteristics of the mustakbarin's closest allies -- Zionism, or "the unlawful child of American imperialism." References of this type clearly corroborate Annabelle Sreberry-Mohammadi's and Ali Mohammadi's observation that

"The Islamic Republic, despite its protestations that it is neither racist nor anti-Semitic, continually uses symbols of Judaism to represent Zionism and reproduces tracts from the forged 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' to 'prove' the expansionist nature of Zionism." See their article, "The Islamic Republic and the World: Images, Propaganda, Intentions, and Results," in Hooshang Amirahmadi and Manoucher Parvin (eds.), Post-Revolutionary Iran (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), p. 86. For prayer leaders' analysis of the traits of Zionism, see Montazeri, October 12, 1979, Khutbah, vol. 1, p. 96; Montazeri, December 14, 1979, ibid., pp. 177-179; Khameneh'i, January 9, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 51-52; Imami-Kashani, January 1, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 167-170; and Rafsanjani, Kayhan, September 25, 1982.

66. Ittila'at, November 26, 1988. Also see, Ittila'at, June 18, 1988.

67. Ittila'at, February 4, 1989.

68. May 2, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 131-134.

69. Ittila'at, February 4, 1989.

70. Khameneh'i, January 25, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p.18.

71. Khameneh'i, February 29, 1980, ibid., pp. 53-54. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, May 30, 1980, ibid., pp. 167-168; and Rafsanjani, Kayhan, September 18, 1982.

72. Khameneh'i, August 8, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 256. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, May 15, 1981, ibid. Vol. 3, p. 213; Rafsanjani, January 29, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 220-221; and Hojjat al-Islam Ruhani, before sermon, Ittila'at, December 7, 1985.

73. See, for example, Rafsanjani, November 20, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 107-110; Imami-Kashani, October 30, 1981, ibid., p. 75; and Rafsanjani, December 18, 1981, ibid., pp. 150-151. Islamic Iran's objection to a negotiated settlement with Israel is uncompromising. As Ramazani observes, "The revolutionary regime in Iran has been one of the most implacable enemies of Israel. It aims at the 'eradication' of the state of Israel through the establishment of a Palestinian state by means of an armed struggle." See, Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, p. 149.

74. Khameneh'i, March 14, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 70-71.

For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, March 28, ibid., pp. 90-91; and Khameneh'i, November 28, 1980, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 7-8.

75. See, for example, Khameneh'i, September 12, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 301-302; Khameneh'i, March 13, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 132-133; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, January 1, 1983.

76. See, For example, Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, January 16, 1988; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, March 12, 1988; Musavi Ardebili, Ittila'at, August 6, 1988; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, January 7, 1989.

77. November 20, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 107-110.

78. Khameneh'i, October 10, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 341-342. For similar expressions, see, Imami-Kashani, Kayhan, November 13, 1982; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, December 17, 1983; and Imami-Kashani, Ittila'at, May 4, 1985.

79. January 8, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 187.

80. January 30, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 83-84.

81. See, Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, November 14, 1987; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, January 30, 1988; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, June 4, 1988; and Rafsanjani, July 30, 1988; and Ittila'at, August 20, 1988.

82. See Montazeri, October 5, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 84-85; Montazeri, November 2, 1979, ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 121-122; and Hojjat al-Islam Mahdi Shah-Abadi, Kayhan, September 4, 1982.

83. John L. Esposito, "The Iranian Revolution: A Ten-Year Perspective," in Esposito (ed.), The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact, p. 31.

84. Hunter, p. 41.

85. See, for instance, Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, pp. 24-27; Ramazani, "Iran's Export of the Revolution," pp. 50-56; Rajaei, Islamic Values and World View, pp. 82-85; Rajaei, "Iranian Ideology and Worldview: The Cultural Export of Revolution," in The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact, pp. 71-78 (hereafter, Ideology and world View); and Fred Halliday, "Iranian Foreign Policy since 1979: Internationalism and Nationalism in the Islamic

Revolution," in Shi'ism and Social Protest, pp. 103-106 [hereafter, Halliday].

86. Prayer leaders' references to exporting the revolution should be viewed against the background of the perception conservative Arab regimes (particularly those in the Persian Gulf region) have of revolutionary Iran as a threat to their stability. As Ramazani observes, "The Arab leaders of the Persian Gulf perceive revolutionary Iran as a threat for reasons other than regime interest and Islamic ideology. Neither the putative power of Iran nor the ideological crusade of the Khomeini regime separately or together would pose a great threat to their regimes were it not for the possibility of the contagion of revolutionary fundamentalist Islam within their own societies." See, Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, p. 32. Among the Gulf states, Bahrain and Kuwait have felt most threatened by the possible spread of Khomeini's fundamentalist Islam. Both have large concentrations of Shi'is among their population, and local Shi'i clerics had maintained close ties with Khomeini during his exile in Iraq. Bahrain also feared the revival of Iran's claim to its territory, especially following Ayatollah Sadeq Ruhani's 1979 declaration, that he would lead a revolutionary movement for the annexation of Bahrain, unless its regime establish an Islamic government analogous to that in Iran.

87. September 14, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, p. 54.

88. October 5, 1979, ibid., p. 84.

89. October 12, 1979, ibid., p. 93.

90. On the Iran-Iraq "propaganda war" in the months leading to the outbreak of a full-scale armed conflict, see Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Islam and Arabism: The Iran-Iraq War," The Washington Quarterly (Autumn 1982), pp.181-188.

91. October 19, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 104-105.

92. November 2, 1979, ibid., p. 121. Similar statements were made earlier by Taleqani. See, for instance, July 27, 1979, ibid., pp. 3, 6.

93. October 12, 1979, ibid., p. 93.

94. October 19, 1979, ibid., p. 104.

95. October 5, ibid., pp. 84-85.
96. November 2, ibid., p. 121.
97. September 14, 1979, ibid., p. 55. Also see, Hojjat al-Islam Mahdi Shah-Abadi, before sermon, Kayhan, September 4, 1982.
98. Rafsanjani, December 25, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 161.
99. February 29, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 53-54.
100. March 28, 1980, ibid., p. 87. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, May 23, 1980, ibid., pp. 156-157.
101. Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, p. 131. In March 1981 the Arab states of the Persian Gulf took the threat of Iran's efforts to export the revolution by subversion seriously enough to form the GCC, with the object of coordinating their mutual defense policies through a collective security pact. The six members of the GCC are: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. On the creation of the GCC, see ibid., pp. 114-127.
102. January 8, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 188. Also see, Rafsanjani, March 26, 1982, ibid., pp. 326-327.
103. January 1, 1982, ibid., pp. 174-175.
104. Kayhan, December 4, 1982.
105. Ittila'at, February 5, 1983. For similar remarks, see Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, February 4, 1984; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, December 29, 1984; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 20, 1985; Jannati, Ittila'at, June 22, 1985; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, February 15, 1986; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, October 17, 1987; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 9, 1988. To the best of my knowledge, the multiple bomb attacks against American and other targets in Kuwait in December 1983, which Iran was blamed for sponsoring, have not triggered similar responses.
106. On the Saudi-Iranian pilgrimage dispute, see Menashri, Iran, pp. 244-245, 293-294, 332-333; and Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, pp. 93-96.

107. Ibid., p. 94.
108. See, for instance, Montazeri, September 28, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, p. 76; Khameneh'i, September 19, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 305-306; Imami-Kashani, March 12, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 291; Ardebili, Ittila'at, September 18, 1983; and Hojjat al-Islam Mahdi Karubi, before sermon, Ittila'at, September 21, 1985.
109. September 19, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 306.
110. Ibid., p. 308. For similar expressions, see Imami-Kashani, March 12, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 291; and Ardebili, Ittila'at, September 18, 1983.
111. February 27, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 3, pp. 110-111.
112. Ayatollah Juz'ali, before sermon, Ittila'at, January 15, 1983.
113. Hojjat al-Islam Salek, before sermon, Ittila'at, February 16, 1985.
114. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 20, 1985.
115. Imami-Kashani, Ittila'at, November 23, 1985.
116. Khameneh'i, January 25, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 14.
117. Khameneh'i, February 27, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, p. 111.
118. Khameneh'i, June 12, 1981, ibid., p. 245. Also see, Rafsanjani, September 25, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 2-3.
119. Khameneh'i, Kayhan, December 4, 1982. Also see, Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, February 4, 1984; and Mahdavi-Kani, Ittila'at, December 8, 1984.
120. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, February 15, 1986. Also see, Prime Minister Mir-Husayn Musavi, before sermon, Ittila'at, February 7, 1987.
121. Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, January 30, 1988.
122. September 25, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 2-5.
123. October 16, 1981, ibid., pp. 48-49 [emphasis added]. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, October 31, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 371; and Rafsanjani, October 23, 1981,

ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 61-63.

124. The commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Muhsin Riza'i, before sermon, Kayhan, September 18, 1982.

125. During 1976, the Government of Israel expropriated nearly 6 thousand acres of land in the Galilee for developmental objectives. Some 2 thousand acres were expropriated from Jews, and the remainder from Arabs. The latter have been convinced that the expropriations were aimed against them. Hence "Earth Day," commemorated by the Palestinians annually in the month of March, and usually marked by organized demonstrations and strikes protesting the event.

126. March 26, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 327. Also see, Rafsanjani, April 2, 1982, ibid., pp. 243-244.

127. April 16, 1982, ibid., pp. 360-363. Rafsanjani's assertion that the Palestinians have forsaken the cause of secular nationalism for Islam and Islamic government, echoes the regime's disappointment from Palestinian Liberation Organization as the champion of the Palestinian cause. As Savory writes, "Initially...there was a strong rapport between Khomeini and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, because the PLO had contributed to the overthrow of the Shah. Relations between Khomeini and the PLO deteriorated, however, when Khomeini began to realize that the Palestinian state sought by the PLO was a secular state." See Savory, "Khomeini's Ideology," p. 350 [emphasis in the original].

128. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, January 2, 1988.

129. Ayatollah Amini, before sermon, ibid. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, January 7, 1989; and, Hojjat al-Islam Karubi, before sermon, Ittila'at, May 6, 1989.

130. Ittila'at, January 16, 1988. Also see, Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, January 30, 1988; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, March 12, 1988.

131. Rafsanjani, October 23, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 61-62.

132. Khameneh'i, February 29, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 53-54.

133. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, March 4, 1989. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, February 18, 1989; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, February 25, 1989.
134. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, November 7, 1987.
135. Rajaei, "Ideology and World View," p. 72.
136. Ibid.
137. Sivan, pp. 192-196.
138. Marvin Zonis and Daniel Brumberg, Khomeini, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Arab World (Cambridge: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1987), p. 74.
139. Ittila'at, November 23, 1985.
140. May 16, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 148-149. For similar expressions, see Rafsanjani, October 23, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 62-63.
141. Ittila'at, July 1, 1989.

Chapter VIII:
NATIONALISM AND ISLAMIC WORLD ORDER
IN THE REVOLUTION AND THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

I. Introduction

A common religion may fortify the national cohesion, sentiments and consciousness of its subscribers. This is to say, religion is capable of strengthening the attachment of society to their given territory, or, more precisely, their nation-state. Conversely, as two opposing value systems, religion might undermine the legitimacy of the separate nation-state, thereby eroding the allegiance of its subjects to the territory in which they dwell.

Iran is a classic example of a country where religion -- Shi'i Islam -- has, on the whole, been a pillar of secular, territorial nationalism. Browne informs us, for instance, that prior to the twentieth century no one had suspected that loyalty to the state of Iran and loyalty to the Shi'i sect were two different loyalties.¹ And, Hunter adds, "In reality, religion and nationalism have

always interacted in Iran and have shaped its national identity and character."²

This equilibrium between religion and nationalism has been observed in the Shi'i 'ulama''s attitude toward Iranian nationhood throughout the modern era. During the nineteenth century, and to a large extent in the twentieth century, the Iranian 'ulama' have pronounced their acknowledgment of and loyalty to the Iranian nation-state, despite their conflict with the government. Hence, their protest in the nineteenth century, culminating in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, was aimed at the defense of Islam, but no less, at the defense of Iran's national integrity and well-being. In this respect, "Both liberal intellectuals and 'ulama' seemed to regard nation and religion as indivisible."³ Likewise, even as late as the 1960's, Ayatollah Khomeini continually denounced the Shah in the defense of Islam and, equally, in the defense of the Iranian nation (see below).

Ostensibly, however, the Iranian revolution of 1978-79 marked the end of this often troubled, yet, enduring coexistence between religion and secular nationalism in Iran. Religion has apparently taken its revenge against the Shah's campaign to forge a secular identity to the

Iranian state, by excessively glorifying the country's pre-Islamic past and diluting its Islamic character. The Islamic Revolution thus seemed to corroborate Cottam's estimation in the mid-1960's, that "If a conflict of the two sets of values [Iranian nationalism and Shi'i Islam] is likely anywhere it should occur in Iran."⁴ Indeed, if we take the Islamic regime's dogmatic statements at face value, it would seem that secular nationalism and the territorial nation-state came to be seen, along with other Western ideas and institutions, as a corrupting innovation, an "imperialist plot" designed to sow divisions among the Muslims, who had once been unified in the historical Islamic ummah. "By the 1970's," Menashri writes, "the tendency to abandon supra-territorial concepts in favor of the idea of the territorial nation-state became abundantly evident in the Middle East....But Khomeini's revolution sought to move Iran in the opposite direction -- from nationalism towards the Islamic ummah."⁵

This chapter is concerned with the question of whether the Islamic regime has, indeed, denied the legitimacy of secular Iranian nationalism altogether, proclaiming its exclusive allegiance to the universal vision of Islam; whether or not it has completely denied the constructive

role of nationalism in shaping the national identity and character of Iran? Section B examines the regime's general views on this topic as expressed throughout the first decade of the revolution. This should serve as prelude to section C, which deals with the same theme, through the regime's representations of the Iran-Iraq War. As will be seen, Islamic Iran sought to define the war, not as an armed conflict between two separate and hostile -- Persian and Arab -- nation-states, but as a struggle between "Islam and disbelief," a "sacred jihad" which Iran has undertaken on behalf of God and the Muslims. In this respect, I will show how the regime attempted to underscore the universal Islamic goals of the war -- to broaden its national confines -- by justifying its wartime policies, its successes and failures, through appeals to certain parts of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, most notably the wars of the Prophet Muhammad and the First Imam 'Ali.

B. From Nationalism to the Islamic Ummah?

The state, according to Weber, is "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. Note that 'territory' is one of the characteristics of the state."⁶ Conversely, the Islamic ummah refers to

"ethnic, linguistic or religious bodies of people who are the objects of the divine plan of salvation."⁷ This is to say, in contrast to the Western conception of a state, the basis of the political society in Islam is not territorial but religious. The loyalty of Muslims should be accorded, not to the territorial state as the ideal form of political organization, but to all of their co-religionists, who are united, through the shari'ah, in the Islamic ummah.

Ayatollah Khomeini's writings and statements from the early 1940's seem to confirm his opposition to the former, secular definition of state, and his adherence to the latter, the Islamic definition of political organization. As Ramazani writes, "As early as World War II, Khomeini rejected in his Kashf-i Asrar the very idea of the nation-state on the ground that it is the creation of man's 'weak mind'."⁸ Likewise, Khomeini declared in 1964,

Islam had dismissed racism. There is no difference between blacks, whites, Turks or non-Turks. The only point of reference and source of loyalty is Islam, in which righteousness is the only standard. 'The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct.' (the Quran, 69:13).⁹

Yet, it is clear that Khomeini's stance during this period was more nationalist (or patriotic) than Islamic or universal. Hence, in his Kashf al-Asrar "Khomeini even

uses some nationalist, or better patriotic-Iranian terminology, for example, when addressing his readers...as 'dear compatriots' (ham-mihanan), 'young lovers of Iran' (Irاندust) and 'Iranians who desire glory.' Moreover, unlike in the later Vilayat-i Faqih...he did not stress Islamic unity in the early book."¹⁰ This nationalist bent of Khomeini persisted for a good part of the 1960's. He noted that the Iranian 'ulama' were "defending the laws of Islam and the independence of Iran"¹¹; elaborated on the "welfare of the nation"¹²; and addressed his fellow countrymen as "the Iranian nation."¹³

Yet, by the end of the decade Khomeini's Islamic concepts seem to have overwhelmed his patriotic sentiment, as they extended far beyond the borders of Iran. Marked by their pan-Islamic motifs, Khomeini began to voice his staunch support for the realization of Islamic unity, political and moral, that obliterates prior national, "artificial" divisions among contemporary Islamic states. This apparent change in Khomeini's stance was undoubtedly a reaction to the Shah's secularization campaign, and his concomitant attempt to de-emphasize Iran's Islamic tradition in order to "integrate the pre-Islamic Iranian traditions more forcefully into modern politics and as the basis for Iranian nationalism."¹⁴ Islam thus eliminated

from the definition of the Iranian state, Iranian nationalism was "transformed from a sense of loyalty to an entity called Iran -- with certain ethnic and religious characteristics and a common historical and cultural heritage," which Khomeini and other like-minded 'ulama' had always espoused, "into a cult of the monarchy, with the person of the monarch as the repository of highest virtue. In fact, in the Pahlavi slogan of Khuda, Shah, Mihaan (God, King, Country), king takes precedent over country."¹⁵

At any rate, Khomeini's supra-nationalist vision was well reflected in his Vilayat-i Faqih, where he conceived nationalism as an imperialist plot designed to sow discord among Muslims, in order to facilitate the advances of the infidel West in the Islamic lands. Khomeini wrote:

Imperialism divided our homeland (watan), and turned the Muslims into peoples (shu'ub). When the Ottoman state rose as a united state, the imperialists hastened to divide it. The Russians, the British and their allies concluded a treaty and waged a war against the Ottomans, and later they divided the spoils [of war] among themselves....It is true, many of the Ottoman state's rulers were incompetent... and corrupt, and many placed the people under an absolute monarchical regime. Nonetheless, the imperialists feared lest certain people who have sound virtues and are competent might seize power...and crush the imperialists' property and dreams. A short while after the war [the imperialists] thus divided the country into many petty-states (duwailat) and placed in

each and every petty-state an agent of their own.¹⁶

And, in order to successfully withstand the imperialist onslaught, Khomeini called upon the Muslims to unite; only through unity, he argued, will the Muslims be able "to crush the human and tyrannical gods and the icons which plunder the world."¹⁷

This view, rendering national boundaries among Muslims null and void, was supposedly applauded by the 'ulama' upon their seizure of power in 1979. Yet, in the period that ensued immediately after the demise of the monarchy, a debate was conducted within the ranks of the triumphant, yet heterogeneous, coalition which toppled the shah, concerning the desired nature of post-Pahlavi Iran. This debate has inevitably touched upon the issue of Iranian nationalism and the preferred political organization in the country. It should be stressed that this debate was perfectly understandable in view of the fact that even within the religious establishment, no one single ideology was recognized by all; "Also after the victory [of the opposition], the religious institution contained different, even opposing views than Khomeini's."¹⁸ Even though this debate found its most eloquent expression in the Iranian press before the reinstitution of the khutbah,

it is worthy of at least a brief examination here. This is so, because the views in favor of Iranian nationalism voiced in the debate, surprisingly converged -- not conflicted -- with the regime's later statements on the issue, as will be seen below.

Of the many articles that appeared in Ittila'at's daily column of "Views and Reflections" (Nazar'ha va-Andishah'ha) immediately after the Shah's fall, at least three dealt with the issue of Iranian nationalism and the desired form of political organization in the country. All three writers, separately and for different reasons and motives, have reached two common conclusions. First, that the Iranian people form a group whose members are united by linguistic, historical, and religious ties, a group which is identified with the territory called Iran; and second, that an important constituent of Iranian nationalism is Shi'i Islam.

In an article entitled "Motherland and Islam: The Pillars of Iranian Nationalism" (Vatan va-Islam: Arkan-i Milliyat-i Irani),¹⁹ the author, Javad Hayat, denounced Muhammad Reza Shah's endeavor to cultivate ethnic nationalism and to glorify Iran's pre-Islamic past at the expense of the country's Islamic heritage. He wrote:

During the period of the Shah...Iranian nationalism became extremist (ifrati), its pillars being Aryan racism and the ancient Iranian civilization. Intellectuals...who were associated with this regime identified Iranian nationalism with the Aryan race, recognizing monarchy as the second pillar of Iranian nationalism [after] the territorial motherland (vatan-i sarzamini). Hence they revived ancient customs and traditions and, in effect, presented Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism as the Prophet and the religion of Iran. As a result, the educated classes [became attached to] Aryan chauvinism, which is very much similar to Fascism....In order to forge cultural and linguistic uniformity in the country, [the Shah] banned [native] languages that were spoken by the inhabitants...and imposed upon them his own language and culture.

Nevertheless, the author continued, on the whole, the Shah's campaign to extirpate Islam and to introduce, instead, an alternative, secular and chauvinistic allegiance, was doomed to failure: "The faith of the Muslims in Iran cannot...accept Aryan nationalism and, in fact, considered it an alien corn." Hayat's conclusion was thus clear. Iran's authentic and unique nationalism is composed of two pillars, the motherland and the Islamic heritage of the Iranian nation:

The motherland is a sacred territory (sarzamin-i muqaddas) which was inhabited by our ancestors and molded by our history, our self-sacrifice and the shahadat of our forefathers. The territorial motherland is [the pillar] which provides us with an historical and cultural identity....Due to geographical and historical conditions our country is inhabited by different peoples (aqvam) of different dialects and languages. Hence, the most important pillar which is common to all is the

motherland, that is, Iran....A more important pillar of Iranian nationalism, however, is the religion of Islam. Although the Constitution [of 1907] sanctioned and defined this principle, the father and son [the Pahlavi monarchs] never refrained from violating it. The great Islamic Revolution...has shown the Iranian nation its profound attachment to the religion of Islam....Our religious beliefs have influenced our nation to such an extent that they shaped our spirit and culture.

Likewise, in an article calling for the establishment of "a democratic-socialist republic" in Iran, and not merely an Islamic one, Khalil-Allah Moqaddem praised "the unique culture, customs, traditions, and sentiments of our nation."²⁰ "Among them," he stated, "we must mention Islam and its lofty precepts, which no one denies." Within this context, he declared that a "democratic-socialist republic" means a return to the authentic roots of Iran, its Islamic heritage, or, more precisely, to "the Islam of 'Ali." This type of Islam, he explained, has "safeguarded the principles of equality"; "was oriented toward the pain-stricken classes"; "salvaged the disinherited"; and aimed at "the establishment of a classless society." In a word, the author held that by returning to the original roots of Iran (Islam), the country will recover its genuine national and cultural heritage (socialism).

In another article, Ayatollah Shirazi insisted on "the

Shi'i nature of Iran."²¹ He was especially proud to observe that the Islamic Revolution emerged from the unique traditions and genuine roots of Shi'i Iran. Hence, he too saw no contradiction between Islam and Iranian nationalism, believing in the mutual dependency and convergence between the two. Shirazi explained:

This jihad was waged and led by the young and sinless Shi'i 'ulama'.....It was the Shi'is who sacrificed their lives and experienced torture and banishment....The impetus for the uprising was provided by the assemblies commemorating [the martyrdom of Imam] Husayn and the 'Ashura' ceremonies....If it were not for the revolt of our Shi'i youth, the tyrant and his patron would have not surrendered....The great majority of the population are Shi'is.

Finally, as a progressive member of the Iranian 'ulama', the late Ayatollah Taleqani also attempted to underline the convergence between Islam and Iranian nationalism. For example, in early 1979 Taleqani issued numerous statements on the Kurdish problem, where he repeatedly stressed the Kurds' alleged attachment to the Iranian motherland and to Islam. Consider, for instance, his following words (March 1979):

Greetings to our Kurdish brothers and sisters who, despite many years of oppression and despotism, have kept their Islamic and Iranian character....We believe that there is no significance to such terms as Kurds, Persians, Turks, Baluchis, Shi'is and Sunnis. We are all brothers; we are all the sons of the Iranian motherland and we all belong to the Islamic

nation of Iran.²²

It may be argued, then, that, at least according to the three columnists and Taleqani, there exists no discrepancy between loyalty to the Iranian state and loyalty to Islam. On the contrary, they all held that their common religion but strengthens the national consciousness and cohesion, the uniqueness of Iranian society; that religion and nationalism have always interacted and have shaped Iran's national identity and character. In other words, the nationalist and religious poles of Iranian culture were fused, each contributing to Iran's unique identity and heritage. To sum up, it seems that the three writers and Taleqani would have agreed with the following observation made by Kazemi:

Iranian national identity has...been affected profoundly by Shi'i Islam ever since the Safavids (1501-1722) made Shi'ism a state religion. Shi'ism emphasized the uniqueness of Iranians as it formally separated them from the vast majority of Sunni Muslims, especially those in the surrounding Arabic and Turkish speaking lands. It was this separation...that helped forge a distinct Iranian consciousnessThe 'We-They' distinctions, so central in nationalism, had ample room for growth given the political and doctrinal tensions that separated the Shi'is from the Sunnis. [Thus] to view the Iranian cultural heritage as a conflict between Iran and Islam, as is done by some observers, is quite misleading.²³

The establishment of an Islamic Republic in Iran has led some observers to proclaim the ultimate defeat of nationalism at the hands of revolutionary Islam.²⁴ Indeed, the Khomeini regime's stated conviction, specified in article 10 of the 1979 Constitution, seems to corroborate this view, as it reads,

All Muslims form a single nation, and the government of the Islamic Republic has the duty of formulating its general policies with a view to the merging and union of all Muslim peoples, and it must constantly strive to bring about the political, economic and cultural unity of the Islamic world.²⁵

The Islamic regime's rejection of the validity of the existing international system, based on "artificially" created territorial states -- as discussed in chapter seven -- also seems to confirm the defeat of secular Iranian nationalism in favor of the universal vision of Islam in post-Pahlavi Iran. Yet, it would be wrong to conclude that the Khomeini regime has disapproved of Iranian nationalism, or of the constructive role of nationalism in the development of a distinct Iranian national awareness. For, as will be seen below, nationalism has been able to live, albeit with modified forms, under clerical rule, and to continue as a major force in Iranian culture. In short, despite their stated uncompromising commitment to Islamic unity, the leaders of Islamic Iran have never considered loyalty to the Iranian

state and loyalty to Shi'i Islam as two conflicting loyalties.

It is true, throughout the first decade of the revolution (but especially in the early days) prayer leaders repeatedly pledged their allegiance to the universal vision of Islam, stating that Islamic Iran "is duty-bound to base its overall policies on...the cooperation and unity of the Muslim nations," and to bring about "the political, economic and cultural unity of the world of Islam."²⁶ Likewise, they referred to nationalism as an "imperialist plot" designed "to break the Muslims into sects and groups in the name of pan-Iranism, pan-Arabism, pan-Fascism, and to throw them to war against each other."²⁷ Moreover, they denounced nationalism, as Hunter puts it, as "a political theory based on the parochial interests of a race or a state, which is thus a threat to Islamic universalism."²⁸ As Montazeri observed (November 1979):

The issue of race, the issue of language, the issue of tribe, the issue of geography -- none of these are considered in Islam. The accomplishment of Islam is in this...[that] the Arab has no distinction over the Persian, the Persian has no distinction over the Arab, nor the Persian over the Turk; nor the Turk over the Persian, nor the white over the black, nor the black over the white. The [only] basis for distinction is tagva. This natural instinct that I hold myself more superior than that

tribe; these divisions between black and white which the civilized world has yet been able to solve, were solved by Islam one thousand and four-hundred years ago. Black and white don't matter, geography don't matter....The Kurd has no privilege over the Persian, the Persian has no privilege over the Kurd; all are brothers to each other, [all are] Muslims. This is the logic of Islam.²⁹

These ostensibly dogmatic statements are by no means tantamount to an utter rejection of the merits of Iranian nationalism by the 'ulama', however. They are merely an attempt to deprecate the liberal nationalist opponents of the regime, and the regime-despised notion of secularism associated with them. As Kazemi observes, "The liberal nationalists have had to cope with the fact that secularism has been maligned and disgraced under the Islamic Republic. The regime-controlled socialization agents reinforce these negative views about secularism. But liberal nationalism [remains] an important force in Iranian culture...."³⁰

Other statements by prayer leaders may equally be interpreted as an outright rejection of Iranian nationalism in favor of Islamic universalism, though this too, would be quite misleading. Consider, for example, Montazeri's apparent willingness to acknowledge the superiority of Arab culture and heritage, those of the

"cradle of Islam" (October 1979): "I have always had a special attachment to Arabs, because the Prophet was of the Arabs and the Arabs are the cradle of Islam."³¹ And, Montazeri disclosed approximately a month later, "Once, when I was a child, I always felt delight upon seeing Arabs; I found joy as though I had seen the relatives of our Prophet."³² Or, consider Rafsanjani's remarks, apparently expressing his hope to abolish the Persian language in favor of the Arabic language, and his desire to make the latter the lingua franca of all Muslim peoples (January 1982):

In our culture and our language, we are submissive to the Arabic language. We admit that the Arabic language is the language of Islam; we admit that the most sacred language in the world is the Arabic language and the language of the Qur'an....We are submissive to the Arab nation, to the Arab community, which is the community of the Prophet of Islam, and which speaks the language of the Prophet. We believe that in the future, the Islamic international language (zaban-i bayn al-milal-i Islami) [will be] the Arabic language, not the Persian language. We believe that when one single Islamic government will be established ...its language cannot be anything but the Arabic language.³³

No doubt, this stated devaluation of the Persian language in favor of Arabic, the language of Islam and the Qur'an, seems to be "in stark contrast with the practice of most nationalist movements that seek to purge their language of 'foreign' words."³⁴ Yet, Rafsanjani's remarks were

probably less intended to underscore the worthlessness of the Persian language, as they were designed to exhibit his disdain of the Shah's period, when Western terminology has consciously found its way into Persian. One should also not overlook the propaganda value of both Rafsanjani's and Montazeri's statements for the Muslim world. Indeed, their cited above words can be viewed as yet another attempt to remove the distinctive Shi'i traits of the Islamic Revolution, so as to increase its attractiveness to the Sunni world beyond Iran (see chapter seven).

The Islamic regime's policy toward the ethnic minorities in Iran, is also liable to be misinterpreted as a token of its condemnation of Iranian nationalism. It may be recalled that the ethnic minorities took advantage of the freedom following the Shah's fall to advance their own claims for ethnic rights and regional autonomy. However, "recognition of the ethnic diversity of Iran, and the political problems following from this, was not something that the revolutionary government envisaged."³⁵ To put it differently, the Islamic regime was unwilling to grant the minorities their claimed right to autonomy, as it was detrimental to the integrity of the Iranian state, leading, with all probability, to its disintegration.

Hence, in its refusal to consider the minorities' demands, the Khomeini regime has had in mind the integrity of the Iranian nation-state, not the well-being of Islam. Yet, on the declarative level, the Khomeini regime explained its motives in Islamic terms, arguing that recognition of the minorities' rights was tantamount to accepting divisions among Muslims; and, it has said, since all Iranians are Muslims, accepting their division into different ethnic groups was unthinkable. Prayer leaders have therefore been keen to observe, along with Montazeri (October 1979), that,

Whoever is a Muslim among the Kurdish people, the Turkoman people, the Baluchi people, [and] the Arab people, is loyal to the Islamic Revolution of Iran....We are convinced that our Muslim Kurdish, Arab and Turkish brothers are loyal, because Islam does not differentiate between races....'Surely this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord; so serve Me' (21:92). All are the Muslims of one community. In Islam there are no divisions between Arab and Persian, and there aren't.³⁶

Pure Iranian nationalism thus emerges under the guise of Islamic universalism, a trend which one may detect in many other official statements, as will be seen below.

Enough with disproving the Islamic regime's utter rejection of Iranian nationalism by way of negation. Indeed, there are ample, more "positive" illustrations in the sermons at hand, which show that Islamic Iran's

staunch universalist commitment has been accompanied by a resurgence of nationalist themes in the ideology and practice of the revolution. In this respect, most scholars contend that attempts to revive Iranian nationalist sentiments were particularly visible after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War. As Halliday writes, "Khomeini did talk, prior to September 1980, of 'the nation of Iran,' but since the outbreak of war official propaganda has increased its stress upon this national element in appealing for support against the Iraqis."³⁷ Yet, the sermons at hand clearly show that nationalist themes have been an integral part of the regime's rhetoric much earlier than September 1980, although they were introduced under the guise of Islamic universalism. Consider, for example, Taleqani's discussion (August 1979) of Islamic Iran's universal obligation to liberate mankind:

You must be the torch-bearers of tawhid and Islam in the world of kufr, shirk and matter-worshipping, in order to deliver the world. Just as after the first century of Islam it was Iranians who were able to make Islam blossom (all these 'ulama', all these fugaha', all these transmitters of Tradition (akhbariyyun), all these philosophers, all these painters, most of them were...Iranians)...for this reason, we must be attentive; we have a heavy responsibility, not just a social responsibility toward ourselves, but a responsibility of the world's leadership. 'And thus we have made you [Iran!] a medium nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people and that the Apostle may be a bearer of witness to you' (2:143).³⁸

We see, then, that from Taleqani's universal vision, there emerged a genuine sense of national pride in the Iranian people's contribution to the "blossom" of Islam. In many respects, Taleqani is speaking here as a true Iranian nationalist, proud of his nation's cultural contribution to and superiority in Islamic civilization. Other prayer leaders followed suit. Montazeri, for example, observed (December 1979) that "from the advent of Islam to this very day, Iran has rendered [much] service to Islam. Although the cradle of Islam is Arabia...the services of the nation of Iran to Islam are more than many." In this respect, he noted that all six books of hadith which the Sunnah regards as the most reliable (the sitt al-sihah or al-kutub al-sittah), were compiled by Iranians; "none of them was an Arab." Indeed, he said, al-Bukhari came from Bukhara; al-Hajjaj from Nayshabur; Abu-Dawud from Sistan; Ibn-Majah from Qazvin; and al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasa'i from regions in Transoxania which, according to Montazeri, were at the time parts of Iran.³⁹ It is therefore safe to conclude that "Even the present regime, despite its anti-nationalist feelings, at times exhibits ethnic pride and refers to Iran's role in the development of Islamic civilization."⁴⁰

Moreover, when the Islamic Revolution entered its eighth year, the Khomeini regime has explicitly proclaimed its support for Iranian nationalism, in the sense of one's allegiance to and defense of his motherland. For example, on the occasion of "Unity Week" in November 1987, Khameneh'i discussed the issue of bringing Iranian Sunnis and Shi'is closer together. Within this context, he made a distinction between "positive nationalism" (nasiunalism-i musbat) and "negative nationalism" (nasiunalism-i manfi). The latter type, he argued, is "condemned," because it brings about "schism among Muslim brothers," that is, the Persian-Shi'i majority and those Iranian ethnic groups who are Sunnis. The "positive" type of Iranian nationalism, however, is "good", for it means the unity of all "citizens" for "the protection of the country's borders against foreigners."⁴¹ In other words, the realization of unity between Iranian Sunnis and Shi'is had little to do with the overall notion of Islamic unity, as with the narrower, yet desired and legitimate, issue of strengthening the pillars of the Iranian nation-state.

In April 1989, Khameneh'i has once again argued in favor of "positive" Iranian nationalism. Warranted Iranian nationalism, he said, leads one to "take pride" in his

illustrious ancestors, namely, "Iranian and Muslim philosophers and 'ulama'." Yet, should this type of nationalism take the form of "vainglory" (tafakhkhur), instill in the nation a sense of "superiority" over other peoples, or create "schism" among nations, "we are opposed to this type of nationalism." Indeed, he concluded, this is "negative nationalism," the type always forged by the imperialists in their endless endeavor to keep the Muslims divided and weak.⁴²

This and more, if the Khomeini regime accepted the legitimacy of the Iranian nation-state, it has also joined the consensus and accepted the existence of other territorial nation-states, its passionate rhetoric notwithstanding. For instance, as early as October 1979, Montazeri implicitly suggested that the Qur'an itself sanctions the idea of territorial divisions among peoples and nations, hence recognizing what Piscatori calls "the actual non-universality of the Islamic community."⁴³ In a sermon devoted entirely to the vision of Islamic unity, Montazeri has, nonetheless, cited the following Qur'anic verse (49:13): "O you men! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other." It is noteworthy, that Montazeri has offered neither a Persian translation nor an exegesis

of the verse.⁴⁴ Likewise, even though the same verse has been cited in sermons on several occasions, prayer leaders have never taken care to elaborate on its implied authorization of territorial divisions.⁴⁵ Thus, it seems that the regime's declared commitment to Islamic universalism has stopped prayer leaders short of making an equivalent, explicit commitment to the validity of the separate nation-state.

Yet, the sermons at hand offer further evidence to the regime's deviation from its declared universal vision and its awareness that Iran would have to come to terms with the accepted norms of foreign relations. It is true, we have seen that the Khomeini regime has called for the "political, cultural, and economic" unity of all Muslims. In this respect, it has also called on all Muslim sects to unite in a monolithic opposition to dar al-harb, the mustakbarin, and thereby enable Islam to replay its ordained role in history. Hence, it was stated in August 1980 that "The day when the vast Islamic power will come into existence in this region, and this power will be able to bring down its clenched fists on the mouths of the great, aggressive powers of the East and the West, the Muslim nations will no longer [suffer] weakness, poverty and hunger."⁴⁶ And, this type of nonconformist

declarations have persisted throughout the time span of this research. Accordingly, Khameneh'i asserted in November 1987, that "global istikbar is aiming at the extirpation of Islam, and so the Muslims [must] unite and not allow istikbar to commit its [crimes]."47

Nevertheless, when prayer leaders sought to clarify what is meant exactly by Islamic unity, it became evident that their ultimate goal has not been the establishment of one inclusive Islamic polity, under one central government, on the ruins of existing nation-states. And, nowhere was this clearer than in their quest to bring the Shi'i's and the Sunnis of the Muslim world closer together. To this effect, prayer leaders have made it adamantly clear that unity between Sunnis and Shi'is does not require the obliteration of prior national divisions among contemporary nation-states, along with their respective customs and religious and cultural heritage. Rather, they defined Islamic unity in its narrow sense as "unity of goals" and "unity of purpose" of all Muslims. Unity between Sunnis and Shi'is, they explained, "does not mean that the Shi'is should abandon their beliefs....Our Sunni brothers have their own beliefs; we, the Shi'is, our own beliefs."48 Or,

We have no intention to bring the Sunni

brothers to Shi'ism or the Shi'i brothers to Sunnism. Rather, the unity...of the Muslim brothers should be around a common axis and common bases....Experience has shown us that diversity of beliefs never prevented two brothers from praying [together], from launching a jihad, from performing the Hajj, or from issuing mutual declarations on Islamic issues. What is important is unity of purpose and unity of principles, and this exists between the Shi'i and Sunni brothers in all the Muslim countries. The best axis for the unity of the Muslim nation (ummat) is the most noble Messenger. This is because the Muslim people throughout the world believe in the [Prophet] and demonstrate their devotion to him....[A]ll Muslim countries should lay aside their [petty] differences and strive to establish unity among all Muslim societies by creating one popular movement against istikbar.⁴⁹

Islamic unity therefore means to focus upon what Sunnis and Shi'is have in common -- the Prophet of Islam, the Qur'an, and struggle against a mutual enemy -- not to nullify each other's particular and distinctive marks or to merge politically. "All Muslims should form a community with their different beliefs and with their different sects; a community governed by friendship, cordiality, and cooperation, defending and supporting each other."⁵⁰ Thus, the unity envisaged by the clerical regime is something of an alliance among, rather than the actual political merging of, the different Muslim nation-states.

We see, then, that despite all its millenarianism, the Khomeini regime has come to accept the validity of Iranian

nationalism and has taken pride in Iran's distinctive culture and heritage. In a like manner, the Khomeini regime has toned down its commitment to an Islamic world order, and has implicitly accepted the territorial nation-state. "By the nature of things," Menashri writes, "revolutionary movements, once in power often deviate from their original radical doctrines." Menashri continues,

The Islamic Revolution was no exception. As long as he headed an opposition movement, Khomeini had depicted a 'new Iran' modeled on early Islam. The wholeness of the Islamic ummah, an ecumenist conception par excellence, was the ideal that followed naturally. But, once in power, he knew he could not rule by means of revolutionary slogans....He and his disciples were now called upon to manage, rather than discuss, affairs of state. Soon they compromised, not from any new-found moderation, but from pragmatism responsive to the exigencies of their situation.⁶¹

Indeed, the Khomeini regime has come to terms with reality, though not necessarily with its vision. And, upon the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, its universal vision of Islam has resurfaced with a vengeance; and it has remained in the regime's rhetoric until the cessation of hostilities in July 1988.

C. A War of Islam and Disbelief:
The Armies of the Prophet and Abu-Jahl of Iraq

I have already indicated that following Iraq's invasion of Iran in September 1980, the Khomeini regime found it expedient to make use of Iranian national sentiment, as the war rapidly assumed the more traditional character of an Arab-Iranian struggle. No doubt, in general terms, the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq may be viewed as an armed conflict between two traditionally hostile nationalities. Moreover, inasmuch as the war began as a conflict over border claims and violations, over frontiers and territorial sovereignty, it was a territorial conflict par excellence. Finally, Khadduri's argument that "The root cause of the conflict...was and remain[ed] the Sunni-Shi'i confessional controversy..."⁵² only highlights the national, ethno-cultural antecedents of the war. For, as mentioned, since Safavid times, Shi'i Islam has come to be identified with the territorial confines of Iran, differentiating the country from the Sunni states beyond its borders.

Yet, despite this, and the fact that the war has prompted the regime to draw upon secular Iranian nationalist sentiment, the sermons at hand support an

opposite hypothesis, namely, that the Iran-Iraq conflict has been characterized by the predominance of universal Islamic themes in the regime's official propaganda. This was, in essence, the Khomeini regime's campaign to portray the war, not merely as a conventional territorial conflict between two hostile -- Persian and Arab -- states, but as a war between Islam and disbelief, a sacred jihad which Iran has undertaken on behalf of all Muslims. The reason for this is obvious. As Chelkowski observed, writing before the cessation of hostilities, "Because Iran is at war with an Arab country, it wants to show the Arab world that the fight is not against Arabs per se, but against the 'corrupt, irreligious' regime of the Iraqi Ba'th party."⁵³ In short, the regime sought to hammer in the message that the Ba'th regime was a foe, not of Iran only, but of all Muslims, Persians and Arabs alike, and it has therefore forfeited its legitimacy to rule. Ba'th ideology, it was repeatedly stated,

was not only secular in its principle tenets but was being shaped and articulated by a Christian, Michel 'Aflaq, one of the party's founders....The party's pan-Arab ideology aimed at imposing artificial distinctions between Arab and non-Arab fellow-Muslims and, as such, violated Islamic precepts. The usurpation of 'temporal' authority by a 'military clique' also contradicted Islam, as did the Ba'th regime's 'tyrannical' character and its mistreatment of the dispossessed.⁵⁴

Yet, as will be seen below, the regime's attempts to "islamicize" the war -- to broaden its national confines -- were not designed for winning external, Muslim support only; they were equally aimed at sanctifying Iran's wartime policies -- its goals, successes and failures throughout the conflict -- internally, in the eyes of the Iranian public. To this end, the regime has attempted to depict the war as a reenactment of the wars portrayed in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, particularly those waged by the Prophet Muhammad and the Imam-Caliph 'Ali. The remaining portion of the chapter will therefore examine this official Iranian campaign to bestow upon the war a universal, Islamic aura, with particular emphasis on the regime's endeavor to justify its policies throughout the various stages of the conflict by means of the "war myth" of the dawn of Islam.

Iraq's invasion of Iran on September 22, 1980, immediately prompted prayer leaders to equate the conflict with the celebrated wars of the Prophet Muhammad. This is of prime importance, since the equations at this early stage signified how Islamic Iran would visualize the goals and nature of the conflict thereafter. A close examination of these early sermons may therefore serve as a point of departure for our discussion.

In the first sermon delivered immediately after Iraq's invasion, Khameneh'i informed his audience that the war was identical to the Battle of the Trench. The latter, he explained, was a supreme effort by the infidels to break the Prophet's power, "to bring Islam down to its knees." While digging a trench around Medina for the defense of the town, the Prophet hit a stone with his pick upon which a spark came out. The Prophet told his companions, "In this spark I saw that the palaces of Khosrow will be conquered by you"; "In...this spark I saw that the palaces of Caesar will be seized by you." The Prophet then told his companions, "Once you win this war, the time of your assault on the superpowers will come." No doubt, Khameneh'i continued, this prophecy materialized. The infidels, who rallied their forces around Ibn 'Abdud, were convinced of their ability to "defeat the government of Islam." Nevertheless, the commander of the Prophet's army, 'Ali, caused Ibn 'Abdud "to welter in his blood," and thereafter "the conquests (futuh) of Islam commenced."

The Islamic Republic of Iran, Khameneh'i asserted, is confronting the same circumstances. "Today, Ibn 'Abdud [Saddam Husayn] is present in the battlefield of Iran. This deluded ignorant (jahil) fanatic has advanced forward

to the battlefield." And, just like besieged Medina in 627 A.D., "the brave warriors of Islam are standing up against kufr, and all of kufr." Accordingly, the vision which the Prophet saw in the spark is also applicable to, and will be realized by twentieth-century Iran:

It has been established today that the gate through which we will be dispatched toward the palaces of Caesar and Khosrow will be opened. O the armies (junud) of Allah! It has been established that we are pursuing the conquest of the...region, 'one party fighting in the way of Allah'...it is fighting for the Qur'an, it is fighting for the Islamic Republic, 'and the other unbelieving' (4:76)...it is fighting for kufr.

"The gate for the global conquests of Islam is Iraq," Khameneh'i concluded. "The road for the roaring flood, which must proceed toward the palaces of oppression, is Iraq."⁵⁵

The significance of this sermon for understanding the regime's perception of the war, its goals and nature, will be dealt with shortly. Prior to this, it is necessary to examine another sermon, delivered in early October 1980, where Khameneh'i equated the two-week old conflict with yet another war of the Prophet, the Battle of Badr. In Khameneh'i's account of the events leading to the battle, the Prophet's forces intended to attack a large caravan "of the Quraysh infidels" which was setting out from Syria

to return to Mecca. Meanwhile, word reached Mecca of the danger in which the caravan would be placed. Hence, the Meccans, led by Abu-Jahl, set about raising a large force which was dispatched to confront the Muslims. Back in Medina, "the valiant Arab and Muslim warriors" "were very desirous to pursue the caravan which was carrying wealth and goods, and had no...defensive capabilities." However, God decreed that, rather, "they should confront the armed kafir warriors of the Quraysh": "And when Allah promised you one of the two parties that it shall be yours and you loved that the one not armed shall be yours" (8:7). And, indeed, "the caravan left, but the Muslims confronted the infidels in a place called Badr."

Why, Khameneh'i asked, has God insisted that the Muslims should wage war against the armed infidels, leaving the caravan unharmed? "And Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by his words" (8:8). This is to say,

God desired to establish the truth in the world arena: 'That He may manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false, though the guilty disliked' (8:8). He wanted batil...to be abolished all at once. Is it not established that Islam overthrows all powers and satanic and tyrannical regimes?... Is it not established that the banner of Islam is raised above the summit of man and humanity? ...Is it not established that the fortresses of zulm and of the Satan are to fall one after the

other? The devout, determined Muslim at the advent of Islam did not know where to start from. God instructed him, God put it forth for him, God engaged him in an undesirable war... [so he may] open the way for progress and influence, [so he may] open the way for strengthening the power of haqq.

And, it was precisely for this reason that God has brought forth Iraq's invasion of Iran. For, Iran too, is "undesirably confronting the multitude [and] tremendous troops of the enemy." Moreover, just like the Muslims at the Battle of Badr, Iran has joined in battle in order to "reach the gate of conquering the world of Islam." Indeed, by means of the Iran-Iraq War, "Islam is in a state of advancing; Islam is in a state of struggle...to reach the destination which God has ordained for it: 'That He may make it overcome the religions, all of them, though the polytheists may averse' (61:9)."⁵⁶

It is more than implicit in these early representations of the war, that Iran was allegedly confronting infidels, and, consequently, that it has joined in battle, not for national considerations, such as the defense of its frontiers, but for the propagation of Islam; for the "global conquests of Islam," designed to bring "kufr down to their knees," and thus bring the entire world, the unsubjugated dar al-harb, into the house of Islam. In other words, prayer leaders displayed the

ongoing war, not as a conventional territorial conflict, but as a struggle between Islam and disbelief, a sacred jihad as prescribed in Islamic jurisprudence. A few words about the notion of jihad in Islam may clarify the point.

The term jihad is an Arabic word with the etymological meaning of "effort," "striving" or "struggle" directed toward a determined objective. However, because in the Qur'an and the hadith the term is often "followed by the words 'in the path of God,' it has usually been understood as meaning 'to wage war'."⁵⁷ In classical times jihad, as an offensive war "in the path of God," evolved into a full-fledged doctrine. It emerged as a "collective obligation" imposed on the Muslim community as a whole, or a fard kifayah. This obligation has its roots in the classical Muslim conception of what we call today the "Law of Nations," deriving from

the fundamental principle of the universality of Islam: this religion, along with the temporal power which it implies, ought to embrace the whole universe, if necessary by force....[The] conversion [of the infidels] to Islam is obligatory under pain of being put to death or reduced to slavery.⁵⁸

In other words, in contrast to the modern law of nations which presupposes the existence of different states, the Muslim law of nations recognizes "no other nation than its own, since the ultimate goal of Islam was the

subordination of the whole world to one system of law and religion...."⁵⁹ In short, the Muslim law of nations was based on the theory of a universal state; mankind, it argued, constitute one community, bound by one law, Islam, and governed by one ruler - God or his vicegerent.

Thus the Islamic state must be in a constant expanding process until it establishes Islam as the dominant reigning Ideology over the entire world. Jihad was therefore enforced as a means to achieve that end. As Khadduri notes, "the jihad may be regarded as Islam's instrument for carrying out its ultimate objective by turning all people into believers...."⁶⁰ And until that goal is achieved, jihad will remain a permanent obligation upon the entire Muslim community.

Here, no doubt, is the desired message Khameneh'i sought to convey in his early sermons on the Gulf War. The war, he meant to say, is not simply an armed conflict, but a jihad against kufir, as outlined above. (Although, the Shi'i doctrine of jihad is somewhat different from the classical theory, as will be seen below). This is, for example, how the former commander of Iran's ground forces, Sayyad Shirazi, put it (September 1982):

Certain people refer to the war as a cause for

the grief of families, [they refer to it] in terms of many wars that occurred in the past and were not waged for God's sake; like World War II which caused the death of millions and brought destruction and demolition....Today, however, we have changed the meaning of war, for we consider it a great blessing...a jihad fi-sabil Allah. If it were not for [this jihad], how would we be able to distinguish between those who tell the truth and those who lie, or separate between companions and traitors?⁶¹

Accordingly, the Iran-Iraq War assumed some of the most salient characteristics of the classical theory of jihad. For example, the classical theory holds that

The jihad is not an end in itself but a means which, in itself, is an evil (fasad), but which becomes legitimate and necessary by reason of the objective towards which it is directed: to rid the world of a greater evil; it is 'good' from the fact that its purpose is 'good'.⁶²

Rafsanjani's views on the ongoing war converged with the above. He argued (September 1981) that war is the "work of Satan," and of "fasid people," and added, "we are disgusted by the cause of war; I wish there would have been no strife in the world....Truly, if we could put an end to this war one second sooner and we don't, we are committing evil." Nevertheless, he continued, war is a reality in our world, for Satan is present among people. Hence, on account of these circumstances, "war was written down for us as...a struggle for haqq and as a duty." In short, war is good, because its purpose is good.⁶³

Moreover, in accordance with the classical notion of jihad, the war has been categorized as a fard kifayah; as a "collective" obligation

which is imposed upon the community considered as a whole and which only becomes obligatory for each individual in particular to the extent that his intervention is necessary for the realization of the purpose envisaged by the law. Thus, as soon as there exists a group of Muslims whose number is sufficient to fulfill the needs of a particular conflict, the obligation of the jihad no longer rests on the others....In the organized state...the appreciation of the precise moment at which the jihad is transformed into an 'ayn [individual] obligation is a matter for the discretion of the sovereign.⁶⁴

It was largely because of these considerations that Khameneh'i urged Iranian youngsters (November 1980) to "Go to the front with the permission of your father and mother." "As long as [the] jihad has not [become] a vajib-i 'ayni," he said, "...our youngsters are duty-bound to go with the permission of [parents], not without permission."⁶⁵ Imami-Kashani reiterated Khameneh'i's views on the matter in late April 1982. He said that as long as there is sufficient number of "our mujahidin" participating in the war, parents' refusal to allow their children to join in battle "is binding."⁶⁶ It is noteworthy, that similar statements have been issued throughout 1982.⁶⁷ This, no doubt, reflected the

improving situation in the front, when, beginning in mid-July 1982, Iran carried the war into Iraqi territory. In a word, the fear of defeat diminished significantly, assuring, at least for the meanwhile, that the war would not be transformed into a fard 'ayn, whereby the jiḥad obligation would fall, individually, upon all able Iranians.

Finally, the Iran-Iraq War, like the classical notion of jiḥad, had the universal effect of extending the sway of faith; the Iranian armed forces were, in many respects, regarded as a reincarnation of the Prophet's troops who set out to subjugate the pagan tribes beyond the confines of Islam in Medina. As Khameneh'i announced in October 3, 1979:

These are our forces, this is the faith of our people; this is our great army; these are the mujahidin who are reviving the memory of the mujahidin of the advent of Islam.⁶⁸

And, as he added two weeks later:

In all the war fronts, from Dazful to Khorramshahr, in all the regions of Khuzestan I had visited...the examples of the bravery and self-sacrifice of the advent of Islam are to be seen [everywhere]. This war is truly the war of the companions of the Apostle of God against the infidels and the polytheists.⁶⁹

Yet, the first phase of Iran's jiḥad to propagate the

palace...which has made millions of people prisoners in Iraq." Our war, he concluded, is "a jiḥad fi-sabil Allāh, a divine war, similar to the military expeditions (ghazavat) of the Prophet of Islam."⁷¹ And, on the occasion of "Jerusalem Day" in July 1982, an anonymous Iranian representative, speaking before the sermon, assured his audience that the "Muslim warriors" will "continue the jiḥad until the last stroke is laid on the 'Aflaqi-Saddami regime." Hence, he said, Iran will "deliver the Islamic country and the Muslim people of Iraq from this great oppression...."⁷² In a like manner, Hojjat al-Islam Hasan Ruhani explained in July 1984, that the object of Iran's jiḥad was to "eradicate oppression."⁷³ Finally, Iran's Foreign Minister, 'Ali Akbar Velayati, speaking in June 1985 before the sermon, restated Iran's commitment to "continue the war until final victory."⁷⁴ It is noteworthy, that declarations of this type have ceased abruptly around late 1985. This, no doubt, signalled the regime's dawning realization that the war had become a major source of resentment and a burden, and that it therefore might have to end before the achievement of the ultimate goal of "War, war, until final victory!"

At any rate, it is evident from these and other

statements, that Iran has sought to present its wartime policies as guided, not by national considerations, but by Islam: its main concern was the propagation of Islam, and its jihad was the instrument for the attainment of this objective; first in Iraq, and later, throughout the region. For Iraq, as mentioned, was regarded as the first phase of the jihad -- it was merely the "gate" through which Iran's "Islamic conquests" would commence. And, nowhere was this clearer than in the regime's efforts to bind together the Iran-Iraq War with the struggle against the "unlawful child of American imperialism," Israel.

Prayer leaders began to emphasize Iran's commitment to carry the war forward into Israel in July 1982, when the Iranian armed forces have, for the first time, gained the military advantage in the front. It is evident that it was largely the turning of the military tide, with the resulting boost in morale, which accounted for such presumptuous declarations. Hence, it was declared on the occasion of "Jerusalem Day" in July 1982, that "The heroic Muslim nation of Iran" will continue the war against "Saddam-Kafir" until victory, which, in turn, will "open the way to Jerusalem (Bayt al-Muqaddas)."⁷⁵ In a like manner, Hojjat al-Islam Isma'il Ferdowsi-Pur assured his audience (November 1982) that,

in the final analysis victory is with you, and in the final analysis you will conquer Iraq, and your warriors...will reach noble Karbala, and from there they will arrive in Jerusalem and conduct a prayer in the Masjid al-Aqsa.⁷⁶

And, Hojjat al-Islam Salek added (December 1982):

We will continue the war until the annihilation in battle of the Saddam regime, and after the pilgrimage (ziyarat) to Karbala we will proceed toward the liberation of our precious Jerusalem.⁷⁷

It should be noted that declarations such as these persisted until 1986,⁷⁸ but, much like their counterparts dealing exclusively with the removal of Saddam Husayn, have completely disappeared from sermons ever since. In any case, Iran's celebrated slogan, "The road to Jerusalem passes through Karbala," presented in its various versions above, should also be viewed within the context of Iran's supra-national war calculations. This is to say, the liberation of Karbala, which is one the most sacred sites of Shi'i Iran and of the Shi'ah at large, is not an end in itself; it is only a passageway for the liberation of Jerusalem, which is the holy site of all Muslims, Shi'is and Sunnis alike.

The Khomeini regime's determination to persist in the jiḥād until the elimination of the Iraqi regime and, later, until the liberation of Jerusalem, signifies, in

many respects, Islamic Iran's policy of exporting the revolution as distinctly applied to Iraq. It may be recalled (see chapter seven) that the Shi'ah doctrine of war and peace, which holds that wars to spread Islam can only be waged by the Imams, has been one determinant in stopping the regime short of exporting the revolution by force of arms. Nevertheless, as observed, Iran's jihad against Iraq had the effect of propagating Iran's brand of Islam on Iraqi soil. In other words, if according to the classical theory, jihad is the ultimate instrument for extending the faith of Islam, the jihad against Iraq became, by necessity, synonymous with Iran's efforts to export its revolution to that country. Hence, the Iran-Iraq War was the one single exception where the Islamic regime has been willing to use coercive force as a means of exporting the Islamic Revolution. Has Islamic Iran, then, violated a major religious precept? Has it launched an aggressive jihad with the aim extending the sway of faith? According to the Khomeini regime, it has abided by Shi'i law in letter and in spirit, for its jihad against Iraq was by no means an aggressive war, its universal goal of propagating Islam notwithstanding. A few words about the doctrine of jihad in twelver-Shi'ism may clarify the point.

The doctrine of jihad in twelver-Shi'ism is fundamentally similar to classical notions. Two differences, however, are apparent: in the first place, the Shi'is added dar al-iman (the house of faith -- where the Shi'is reside) to the traditional dichotomy of dar al-Islam and dar al-harb. Accordingly, they are permitted to wage a non-violent jihad, a struggle of persuasion, aiming at the conversion of dar al-Islam (the Sunnis) to dar al-iman.⁷⁹ And in the second place, the twelver Shi'is hold that the jihad obligation is conditional upon the manifest presence of the Imam. Thus the doctrine of jihad has lost its practical character since the last Imam went into occultation in 874 A.D. However, armed defense against foreign aggression, or a defensive jihad, remains permissible.⁸⁰ This theory became the basis of all later Shi'i views on war and jihad. This is to say, the distinction between an offensive war, for the expansion of dar al-Islam, and its defense, meant that the former cannot be launched without the Imam's presence or his direct command.

This restriction on the launching of a jihad was strictly observed by successive generations of Shi'i jurists. For instance, when the Iranian 'ulama' proclaimed a jihad against Russia in 1825-26, they stressed that

their object was the defense of Islam and the Muslims.⁸¹ Khomeini himself had recognized this distinction between the offensive and defensive jihads in the beginning of the 1940's. He wrote:

There are two types of wars in Islam: one is jihad; that is, the war of expansion...and the other is difa', struggle to preserve one's independence. Jihad means expansion and the taking over of other countries, which will be carried on by the Imam himself or under his command....The second type, what we call difa' ...does not require the Imam or his command.⁸²

The defensive character of jihad was also underlined during the last stages of the revolutionary period of 1978-79. For instance, when the 'ulama' proclaimed a jihad against the government of Shahpur Bakhtyar, Taleqani announced:

Bakhtyar and his people do not know the real meaning of jihad. When they foolishly say that a jihad is an obligation which is enjoined on the Muslims only in their struggle against the infidels, they display their ignorance. Jihad is enjoined for the defense of the Muslims' rights, the very rights which others plundered. In this case, the launching of a jihad is an obligation.⁸³

The Iran-Iraq war was similarly conceived as a defensive jihad. As Ramazani contends, the Islamic regime "considers resorting to holy war (jihad) as the prerogative of only the infallible Imam, and in his absence the faqih is estopped from waging an offensive

war. But defensive war...is another matter since it is in self-defense and hence the faqih is duty-bound to resort to it by all means."⁸⁴ Indeed, sermons delivered throughout the eight-year war are replete with reference to the conflict as a defensive jiḥād. And, as will be seen below, statements to this effect were exceptionally fascinating, because, as the war progressed, they drew upon Iranian national sentiment, as well as upon universal Islamic themes. In other words, hand in hand with the transformation of the conflict into an Iranian-Arab struggle, prayer leaders have attempted to present Iran's wartime effort as aiming at the defense of Islam, but also at the defense of the Iranian homeland, its territorial integrity and national honor.

The first detailed discussion on the defensive nature of the jiḥād was offered by Khameneh'i in late October 1980. "The war of Islamic government," he argued, "is not a war for country conquering." Rather, it is waged "in order to defend the honor of Islam and the sovereignty of the Qur'an." That is, when, after the establishment of an Islamic government,

the enemies want to revolt against the government and to...tear up this flower which was irrigated by the blood of martyrs, the able hand of Islamic government comes out of its sleeve and cuts the hand of the flower-picker

(gulchin) and of the plunderer. The sword of Islam is like a thorn; it defends the flower of Islamic government. 'You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the latter day befriending those who act in opposition to Allah and His Apostle' (5:33). People who oppose and resist God and the Apostle of God, that is, Islamic government, are subject to punishment.⁸⁵

We see, then, that during this early stage of the war, Iran's defense was still defined in terms of Islam -- in terms of defending the Islamic government, which safeguards "the honor of Islam and the sovereignty of the Qur'an."

Yet, when the war entered into its second year, Iran's defense was already given a national, patriotic flavor, although this too, was camouflaged by Islamic themes. Ardebili, for example, cited (September 1981) a sermon delivered by Imam 'Ali on the eve of the Battle of Siffin. This was apparently meant to bestow upon the defense argument an Islamic aura. Nevertheless, the contents of 'Ali's sermon, and the lessons which Ardaeilī has drawn from it, leave no doubt as to the prayer leader's real intention: to cultivate support for the war by drawing upon Iranian national sentiment. Consider 'Ali's words to his people, as cited by Ardebili:

Do you not see...that the boundaries of your state are getting shorter and shorter daily and parts of your country are being snatched and

usurped...and your cities are being invaded?

Now consider Ardebili's conclusions:

Do you not see Abadan; do you not see Qasr-Shirin; do you not see other towns....Do you not see [how] they shed the blood of your youngish on the soil of your country? You must resist the aggression committed by global istikbar and imperialism against your independence and territorial integrity.⁸⁶

In October of the same year, Muhammad Yazdi had used the same technique. That is, he cited several verses from the Qur'an in order to underscore the Islamic nature of Iran's defense. Nevertheless, his commentary on the verses carried with them national, patriotic themes side by side with Islamic ones. Hence he told his audience, "Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged" (22:39). He then explained,

Yes, when aggression is committed against your country, when aggression is committed against your sacrosanct things (mugaddasat), when injustice is committed against your religion, against your faith, God allows you to go to war, to revolt and to fight....The issue of defense (difa') is both a religious and a rational obligation (vajib-i shar'i va-'aqli). When the enemy commits injustice and... aggression against the Islamic community and the Islamic country, [all must]...rise up in defense and mobilize their resources for defense; and, until...they drive away the enemy, they should not sit down....'Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah' (22:40)....If the enemy commits aggression, the result of which [people] are expelled from their homeland (mihan)...and

their towns, you must rise up and fight, until the last of the enemy's men is driven away.⁸⁷

It is noteworthy, that during the same period Ardebili was even willing to justify Iran's defense with purely secular, patriotic arguments. Hence, he stated, "We are a nation whose territory has been violated; we are a people whose independence has been violated." He then added,

We are defending our independence and our homeland. Does the defense of independence and of the homeland has borders or boundaries? [Can we say], 'I will defend my own existence for three days or my homeland for one month[?].' As long as there is aggression, as long as there is zulm, there is also defense, there is also resistance by a struggling nation.⁸⁸

In May 1982, however, Ayatollah Muhammad Mahdi Rabbani-Amlashi has once again elected to substantiate Iran's defense argument on purely Islamic grounds. In an appeal to Muslim regimes, he pointed out that Iraq had first attacked Iran, and hence all Muslim countries should side with Iran in the war. And, he justified his argument by pointing to the "international charter (manshur bayn al-milali) of Islam," which reads: "And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command" (49:9). And he went on to say,

O Muslims of the world! You are obligated, if

you are members of the United Islamic Nations Organization (Sazman-i Bayn al-Milal-i Islami), to make peace between the two countries....But if there is no peace and one of the two sides commits injustice and aggression... 'fight that which acts wrongfully.' That is...stand beside Iran and fight Iraq.⁸⁹

We see, then, that throughout the first two years or so of the Gulf War, prayer leaders have continually justified Iran's jihad in terms of defense, whether of Islam or of the Iranian motherland. No doubt, it is an undisputable fact that Iraq was first to launch an attack against Iran on September 22, 1980, leaving the latter no choice but to defend itself. Iran has therefore had every right to brand the conflict as an "imposed war" (jang-i tahmili). But even when Iran first invaded Iraqi territory in July 1982, the Islamic regime continued to justify its actions in terms of defense, drawing upon both patriotic and Islamic motifs. This is, for example, what Ardebili had to say exactly a month after Iran carried the war into Iraqi territory on July 13, 1982:

Certain individuals have set forth [the idea] that the aggressors have been driven out from our country since we have set foot on their territory and are launching a war against them. They say, 'Is this not in itself an aggression? Have we not called it an aggression when Iraq attacked Iran [on its own soil]? Thus, what is the difference between us and them now?'.... Everybody knows that Saddam is a kafir and that...his masters [the U.S.] are eager...to exterminate us, and [for that reason] they have

placed us under aggression. What, then, are we supposed to do in the face of such aggression? 'Ali said in regards to this issue: 'Either you accept abjectness, or resist with swords in your hands.' We too, either we surrender to the Saddams or resist them with the sword.... [Saddam] started the war and we have been defending since that day. Also today, we are defending on Iraqi soil; and if we take one step forward, it is [because] we recognize the aggressor.... So long as Saddam should attack us from the rear line, we will also fight him. For... 'Ali said: 'The aggressor should be destroyed on his own soil'.⁹⁰

In later phases of the war, prayer leaders continued to uphold the defensive nature of Iran's jihad, employing both patriotic and Islamic arguments. For example, in November 1982 Imami-Kashani explained Iran's right to defend itself in patriotic terms, concealed, however, under the veil of Islam. He denied that Iran was "committing aggression" by virtue of its troops' presence on Iraqi territory, and added:

Do we have the right, from the standpoint of Islam, to come to a standstill while the oil of our towns is still in the hands of the aggressive Zionist enemy, and while their... bombs are still [falling] on our people and cause demolition in our towns? Hence the old and young, and all of our people, are set in motion... in order to cut the hands... of global istikbar. This is an Islamic obligation.⁹¹

Indeed, the obligation of defense may be Islamic, but Imami-Kashani's explicit goal has been to arouse Iranians to defend their own territorial nation-state which was

under constant Iraqi attacks.

Moreover, in July 1984, Hojjat al-Islam Hasan Ruhani asserted that Islam enjoins on the Muslims "defense and Jihad , so that they would be able to carry on their daily lives, and observe their religion." In this respect, he called Iran the "motherland" (mihan), a term so often invoked by the Shah. Yet, in a most typical manner at that time, he was careful enough to add the word "Islamic" after it, turning Iran into the "Islamic motherland."⁹² Approximately a year later, Ruhani acknowledged that "If defense in war is intended to preserve a piece of land or the life of a people, this defense is sacred (muqaddas)."⁹³ In other words, the defense of the territorial nation-state is warranted. He immediately went on to say, however, "But if defense takes the form of preserving religion, that defense is more sacred than everything."⁹⁴ It is noteworthy, that prayer leaders have persisted in the defense argument until the very last days of the war. For example, in June 1988, Hojjat al-Islam Sayyid Reza Akrami announced that, "Ninety-three months of sacred defense by the Muslim and revolutionary nation of Iran have passed."⁹⁴

Despite its implied patriotic bent, the Khomeini

regime has repeatedly attempted to "islamicize" the conflict, by justifying the government's wartime policies, its successes and failures, in terms of "Islamic strategy" as was conducted in the age of the Prophet and Imam 'Ali. In this respect, we have already seen that the regime advocated a military solution to the conflict. Confident of ultimately defeating Iraq, the Islamic regime has, at least until 1984-85, rejected all diplomatic overtures to end the conflict, as well as all peace plans which were proposed by various international and Islamic forums and governments. And, to justify Iran's uncompromising stance essentially meant one thing: to appeal to the Prophet's and 'Ali's parts in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, in order to show that the regime's conduct was matched to that of the two "Supernatural Beings" at the advent of Islam.

For example, in October 1980 Khameneh'i proclaimed that Iran has no intention of according any serious attention to peace efforts. "Our policy and our strategy," he proclaimed,

are not a policy and a strategy that permit this country...to [cease hostilities] for one minute. We will always be in a state of struggle (mujahadat)...just like the Prophet had fought approximately seventy wars throughout the ten years of his government. He had seventy confrontations and battles, the average of at least one confrontation every two months.⁹⁵

In a like manner, Khameneh'i rejected the peace proposals, presumably of a U.N. delegation visiting Iran during March 1981. He argued that the U.N. peace plan only "encourages the oppressor and the aggressor," for it includes neither "punishment of the wrong-doers" nor "the administration of justice to the wronged." And, he justified Iran's position saying that when, in the Battle of the Trench,

the infidels of the Quraysh and their allies (ahzab) attacked Medina in order to [topple] the revolution, God had not authorized the Prophet to make peace with them. When America, with the assistance of all the [puppet] reactionary governments in the region attacked us, by means of Abu-Jahl of Iraq, God has not authorized us to turn a blind eye toward the right of the two nations, the nation of Iran and the nation of Iraq; nor did he authorize us to overlook [Iraq's]...atrocities....Why should we pursue peace in which aggression is encouraged?⁹⁶

Imam 'Ali was also recruited to the regime's campaign to vindicate its anti-rapprochement policy. Khameneh'i, for instance, asserted (April 1981) that neither the Iranian troops nor the nation "will yield to any [peace] conspiracy." This means not, he said, that Iran is opposed to peace. "As the Commander of the Faithful said to Malik Ashtar: 'Pay heed! Whatever peace the enemy offers you, accept it if it is not inconsistent with the command of God'." Yet, he continued, like 'Ali "we will not yield to

submission, collusion with kufr, atheism and aggression, and we are a hundred percent opposed to unreasonable demands and hooliganism."⁹⁷ It is noteworthy, that the last of such appeals to the Prophet and 'Ali, intended to sanctify Iran's uncompromising war policy, occurred in early June 1985.⁹⁸ This seems to corroborate the argument whereby, beginning in 1985, the growing sensitivity to the toll of war has led the regime to "reconsider possibilities for a face-saving, diplomatic solution that would permit Iran to extricate itself from the conflict."⁹⁹

Representations of the Prophet's and 'Ali's conduct were not only designed to justify Iran's reluctance to conclude peace with Iraq, however. They were thought to be equally instrumental in contrasting the cruelty of the Iraqi enemy with Iran's humane and compassionate wartime policies. Hence, Imami-Kashani sought to illustrate (April 1982) Iran's treatment of Iraqi prisoners of war by citing 'Ali's command to his troops during the Battle of the Camel. "If the enemy should flee," 'Ali allegedly said, "pursue them. Do not kill them, pursue them, follow them, drive them out. But should they attack you, kill them." Imami-Kashani then turned to address the Iraqi armed forces, and said:

The forces of Islam which are driving you, the aggressors, out, are...displaying bravery and sacrifice. Should you flee or should you surrender, if you are afraid, be afraid of Saddam. Surrender! The army of Islam will treat you in accordance with Islamic thought. [The army of Islam] is not like yourselves; it is not like the executioner of Baghdad who digs inside Iranian prisoners with the blade of the sword....Surrender to the forces of Islam and find comfort. [The Iranian soldiers abide by] the moral dimension of Jihad . [When he takes prisoners] he says, 'I'm not a murderer like Saddam and the Iraqi aggressive forces'.¹⁰⁰

In a similar fashion, Rafsanjani praised (September 1982) Iranian troops' regard for the lives of Iraqi citizens, as opposed to Iraq's indiscriminate attacks on non-military targets. "Iran is a noble power," he said, "it is like a mother." The enemy too, he observed, is aware of this distinction. For instance, it is aware that "Iranian troops are at the shores of Basra, yet they do not shell the city." The Iraqis see Iranian planes flying on a mission to bomb bridges, "patiently waiting until [non-military] cars would cross them in order to spare the life of [even] one civilian." And, this compassionate conduct of Iran's armed forces has its roots in 'Ali's war conduct:

When he was fed up with the cunning and irreligious designs of Mu'awiyah, 'Ali...said: 'If it were not for taqva which restricts me, Mu'awiyah knows what I would have done to him in the political and military fields. If I were not restricted by my faith, my rival would not

have had the upper hand'.¹⁰¹

Likewise, this is how Rafsanjani explained (September 1982) why, contrary to Iraq, Iran was not willing to bombard civilian targets. Addressing the Iraqis directly, he said,

We do not commit such [evil] deeds. If you wish to examine our course [in the war], first read the Qur'an; then you will appreciate how a Muslim [should] fight. [If] you read the history of the wars of Islam you will see which advices the Prophet had given when he dispatched an army [to war]. He said, 'In war, do not cut down trees, do not persecute the fugitives, do not strike the injured for a second time; take care not to destroy churches, and don't commit aggression against those who are not fighting against you'.¹⁰²

Finally, if appeals to the mythological heroes of Islam helped the regime further the cause of war, they were equally thought to be helping the cause of peace. Thus, in order to sanctify the July 21, 1988, decision to accept the terms of the United Nations cease fire Resolution 598, it was equated with the Prophet's decision to conclude the peace treaty of Hdaybiyah with the Meccans in 626 A.D. It is noteworthy, that the regime's acceptance of the cease fire resolution has encountered the opposition of certain Iranian hard-liners, claiming that it was disadvantageous to Iran. The treaty of Hdaybiyah was similarly criticized by some of the

Prophet's Muslim contemporaries. They specifically pointed to the second provision of the treaty which required the Prophet to send back "any Meccan who came to him without the consent of his protector or guardian. Any Muslim, however, going to Mecca was not to be sent back to the Prophet."¹⁰³ Yet, this was all "part of Muhammad's program of consolidating his strength and building a complex of tribes in alliance with himself."¹⁰⁴

Hence the equation of Iran's acceptance of the U.N. resolution with the Prophet's acceptance of the treaty of Hdaybiyah. This is to say, prayer leaders have argued, despite the seemingly detrimental provisions of the resolution, Iran's endorsement of the terms will, in the final analysis, prove to be advantageous to the Islamic Republic, just as the peace of Hdaybiyah proved to be beneficial to Islam. Consider, for example, what Rafsanjani had to say in regards to Khomeini's public acceptance of the resolution:

The Imam's message...is analogous to the event of the peace of Hdaybiyah at the dawn of Islam. When the Prophet...accepted the decision to sign the treaty with the polytheists, he too, encountered the protest and the astonishment of those surrounding him; and, at the same time, the signing of the peace treaty of Hdaybiyah, just like the latest historical message of the Imam...was also...a great victory.

And he added later on in the sermon,

When, in the beginning of Islam, the Prophet...signed the treaty of Hudaibiyah... there were many Muslims who...resisted the commands of the Prophet...[Yet], it was under these conditions that God sent down to His Messenger [verse 48:11], 'Surely We have given you a clear victory'....[Indeed], we saw that great victories have been the lot of the Muslims after the [signing] of the treaty. A year after the treaty, the Prophet, and with him ten-thousand of his followers, left for Mecca to perform the Hajj, and this was the prelude to the victories of Islam in...the Arabian Hijaz.¹⁰⁵

Rafsanjani has therefore closed the circle. Their implicit nationalist sentiments notwithstanding, the leaders of Islamic Iran had waged the war for Islam; and now too, they had terminated the war for the sake of Islam. National considerations have never been a factor in Islamic Iran's war calculations, and they were never a factor in the decision to end the war. "The acceptance of the 598 resolution," Khomeini exclaimed, "was a very bitter and tragic issue...particularly for me....God knows that had it not been for the motive whereby all of us, our honor and credibility, should be sacrificed in the interests of Islam and the Muslims, I would never have agreed to this issue. Death and martyrdom would have been more bearable to me."¹⁰⁶

Notes to Chapter Eight

1. E. G. Browne, A Literary History of Persia (Vol. IV; London, 1930), p. 14.
2. Hunter, p. 10.
3. Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision," p. 42.
4. R. W. Cottam, Nationalism in Iran: Updated through 1978 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), p. 9.
5. Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision," p. 41.
6. H. Gerth and C. Mills (eds.), From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (London: Kegan Paul, 1947), p. 78. [Emphasis in the original.]
7. R. Paret, "Umma," The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st edition.
8. Ramazani, Revolutionary Iran, p. 20.
9. As cited in Rajaei, Islamic Values and World View, p. 69.
10. Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision," p. 42.
11. Declaration dated April 3, 1963, Khomeini, Islam and Revolution, p. 174.
12. Declaration dated June 3, 1963, ibid., p. 178-180.
13. Declaration dated October 27, 1964, ibid., p. 182.
14. Kazemi, p. 4.
15. Hunter, p. 12.
16. Khumayni, Al-Hukumah Al-Islamiyah, pp. 34-35.
17. ibid.
18. Menashri, Iran in Revolution, p. 57
19. Ittila'at, March 13, 1979.
20. "Jumhuri-'i Islami ya Jumhuri-'i Dimukratic-

Susialisti" ("An Islamic Republic or a Democratic-Socialist Republic"), Ittala'at, February 22, 1979.

21. "Chira bar-sar Mazhab Da'va Kunim?" ("why do we Quarrel over Religion?"), Ittala'at, July 23, 1979.

22. Ittala'at, March 21, 1979. For similar remarks by Taleqani, see Ittala'at, March 18, 1979.

23. Kazemi, p. 3. The same observation is made by Savory. See his article, "The export of Ithna Ashari Shi'ism," p. 24.

24. See, for example, Arjomand, "Social Movements in the Contemporary Middle East," in Arjomand (ed.), From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam, p. 11.

25. Cited in Savory, "Khomeini's Ideology," p. 352.

26. Montazeri, October 19, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 105-106. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, August 8, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 260-261; Imami-Kashani, January 1, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 168-170; Rafsanjani, Ittala'at, January 22, 1983; and Khameneh'i, Ittala'at, September 15, 1984.

27. Montazeri, December 21, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, p. 186. Also see, Khameneh'i, Ittala'at, January 1, 1983.

28. Hunter, p. 13.

29. November 16, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, p. 141.

30. Kazemi, p. 35.

31. October 5, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 85-86.

32. November 16, 1979, ibid., p. 141.

33. January 8, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 187-188.

34. Halliday, p. 92.

35. Ibid., p. 94.

36. October 19, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 105-106. For similar expressions, see Taleqani, August 3, 1979, ibid., pp. 13-14; and Taleqani, August 31, 1979, ibid., pp. 41-42.

37. Halliday, p. 106.
38. August 10, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, p. 21.
39. December 7, 1979, ibid., pp. 168-169. For similar expressions, see Imami-Kashani, December 4, 1981, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 128.
40. Hunter, p. 12.
41. Ittila'at, November 7, 1987.
42. Ittila'at, April 15, 1989.
43. Piscatori, Nation-States, p. 46. [Emphasis in the original.]
44. October 19, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, p. 106.
45. See, for example, Montazeri, September 21, 1979, ibid., p. 61; Montazeri, November 2, 1979, ibid., p. 117; Montazeri, December 7, 1979, ibid., p. 167; Montazeri, December 28, 1979, ibid., p. 191; Khameneh'i, January 18, 1980, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 4; Khameneh'i, May 23, 1980, ibid., p. 155; and Khameneh'i, June 13, 1980, ibid., p. 186.
46. Khameneh'i, August 8, 1980. ibid., p. 258.
47. Ittila'at, November 7, 1987. For similar expressions made throughout the first decade of the revolution, see Taleqani, August 17, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 24-27; Montazeri, November 9, 1979, ibid., pp. 131-132; Khameneh'i, January 2, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 48-49; Imami-Kashani, January 1, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 167-170; Khomeini's statement on the occasion of "Jerusalem Day," read before the sermon by his son Hojjat al-Islam Ahmad Khomeini, Kayhan, July 17, 1982; Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, January 22, 1983; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, September 15, 1984; Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, November 15, 1986; and Ardabili, Ittila'at, July 8, 1989.
48. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, September 15, 1984.
49. Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, November 15, 1986. For similar expressions, see Montazeri, October 5, 1979, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 85-86; Khameneh'i, January 30, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 83-84; Khameneh'i, April 3, 1981, ibid., pp. 159-160;

Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 16, 1983; and Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, August 15, 1987.

50. Hojjat al-Islam Motaqadi, before sermon, Ittila'at, October 14, 1989.

51. Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision," p. 47.

52. Khadduri, p. 159.

53. Chelkowski, "Stamps of Blood," p. 559.

54. Menashri, Iran, pp. 157-158.

55. September 26, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 315-318. For similar observations, see Khameneh'i, October 10, 1980, ibid., p. 339.

56. October 3, 1980, ibid., pp. 325-327.

57. Bernard Lewis, The Political Language of Islam, p. 72.

58. E. Tyan, "Djihad," The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition [hereafter, Tyan].

59. Majid Khadduri, Law and Peace in the Law of Islam (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1955), p. 45.

60. Ibid., p. 64.

61. Speech before sermon, Kayhan, September 25, 1982.

62. Tyan.

63. September 25, 1981, Khutbah, Vol. 4, p. 10. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, Ittila'at, April 16, 1983.

64. Tyan.

65. November 14, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 390.

66. April 30, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 390-391.

67. See, for example, Muhammad Yazdi, Kayhan, July 17, 1982; and Rafsanjani, Kayhan, October 23, 1982.

68. Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 330.

69. October 17, 1980, ibid., p. 350.
70. October 3, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 1, pp. 332-333.
71. October, 24, ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 355-357.
72. Kayhan, July 10, 1982.
73. Ittila'at, July 14, 1984.
74. Ittila'at, June 15, 1985.
75. Anonymous spokesman, before sermon, Kayhan, July 17, 1982.
76. Speech before sermon, Kayhan, November 20, 1982.
77. Speech before sermon, Kayhan, December 4, 1982.
78. See, for example, Velayati, before sermon, Ittila'at, June 15, 1985; and Rafsanjani, Ittila'at, December 28, 1985.
79. Arjomand, The Shadow of God, pp. 61-64.
80. E. Kohlberg, "The Shi'ah: 'Ali's Sect," in M. Kramer (ed.), Protest and Revolution in Shi'i Islam (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuhad, 1985), pp. 13-14. [in Hebrew.]
81. H. Algar, Religion and State, pp. 86-87.
82. Kashf al-Asrar, as cited in Rajaei, Islamic Values and World view, p. 89.
83. Ittila'at, February 6, 1979.
84. Ramazani, "Shi'ism in the Persian Gulf," p. 36.
85. October 24, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, pp. 355-356. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, November 7, 1980, ibid., pp. 376-378.
86. September 18, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 413-414. Imamai-Kashani cited 'Ali's very same sermon in order to make similar observations in April 1982. See, April 30, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 389-390.
87. October 9, 1981, ibid., pp. 30-31. Also see, Imami-Kashani, December 4, 1981, ibid., pp. 125-126.

88. November 13, 1981, ibid., p. 96.
89. May 14, 1982, ibid., p. 421.
90. Kayhan, August 14, 1982. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i, Ittala'at, April 16, 1983.
91. Kayhan, November 13, 1982.
92. Speech before sermon, Ittala'at, July 14, 1984. For similar expressions, see Sayyid Reza Akrami, before sermon, Ittala'at, September 19, 1987.
93. Speech before sermon, Ittala'at, May 18, 1985. Also see, Khameneh'i Ittala'at, March 15, 1986.
94. Speech before sermon, Ittala'at, June 4, 1988.
95. October 3, 1980, Khutbah, Vol. 2, p. 332.
96. March 6, 1981, ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 123-124. For similar expressions, see Imami-Kashani, March 12, 1982, ibid., Vol. 4, p. 297; and Khameneh'i, March 19, 1982, ibid., pp. 309-311.
97. April 10, 1981, ibid., pp. 166-167. For similar expressions, see Khameneh'i May 15, 1981, ibid., p. 212.
98. Fakhr al-din Hejazi, before sermon, Ittala'at, June 6, 1985.
99. Eric Hooglund, "The Islamic republic at War and Peace," Middle East Report, No. 156 (January-February 1989), p. 6.
100. April 30, 1982, Khutbah, Vol. 4, pp. 391-392.
101. Kayhan, September 18, 1982.
102. Kayhan, September 25, 1982.
103. Watt, Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman, p. 184.
104. Ibid., p. 185.
105. Ittala'at, July 30, 1988. For similar expression, see Khameneh'i, Ittala'at, July 23, 1988.

106. Cited in Chelkowski, "In Ritual and Revolution," p. 11.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Religion is separate from politics in Iran.
Religious leaders are concerned with spiritual
functions only, giving religious guidance and
teaching religious books.
(Iran Almanac, 1973)

The official statement above was rendered in 1974 as more of a wishful thinking than a reality in Iran.¹ Indeed, the Iranian 'ulama's involvement in politics has been a vivid reality much before the 1978-79 revolution which brought them to power in Iran. We have seen in the different chapters of this study (most notably in chapter five), that the 'ulama's participation in politics began with the adoption in Iran of Shi'i Islam as a state religion 1501, and continued through the Islamic Revolution, despite their sometimes acquiescent position toward the political authorities.

Thus, in the Safavid period the 'ulama' were given the opportunity to participate in the political life of the country, as they were increasingly coopted into the state; during the reign of the Qajar dynasty the 'ulama', enjoying popular support and confronting a weak central

government, emerged as the most formidable oppositional group to the state; under the reign of Reza Khan they voiced their political concerns, most notably their opposition to his republican campaign; and under the rule of the last Shah, the 'ulama' were actively involved in politics, whether during Mosaddeq's premiership in the 1950's, or against the Shah's reform program -- his attempts at centralization of governmental authority, modernization and secularization -- throughout the 1960's and the 1970's.

The culmination of the 'ulama's involvement in anti-government politics came in the revolution of 1978-79, as their leadership of the opposition movement, coupled with the vast popular support they enjoyed, caused the collapse of the monarchical order. Yet, the 'ulama's involvement in the social and political affairs of the country did not stop here. For, since the downfall of the Shah and, especially, since the ousting of their counterparts in the heterogeneous movement which toppled the ancien regime, the 'ulama' emerged as the sole political leaders of the "new" Iran, enjoying exclusive supervision over all the executive, administrative and planning affairs of the country.

The 'ulama''s bid for political power and, since 1979, their success in consolidating their rule, stemmed directly from their view whereby there exists no separation between religion and politics in Islam. As early as 1971, Khomeini argued in his Vilayat-i faqih that the withdrawal of the 'ulama' from affairs of state was contrary to Islam and would lead to its destruction. As Menashri notes,

Khomeini repeatedly urged clerics to regard involvement in politics as an essential part of their religious duties. 'This world is political,' he said. Moreover, the separation of religion and state was un-Islamic. In the past, the authority of the Prophet and the caliphs had been both spiritual and temporal. Today, the clerics must launch and lead the struggle and determine the political, social, and economic patterns of the Islamic state.²

This fusion between religion and politics has inevitably left its impact on those religious ceremonies and occasions in revolutionary Iran, which were long thought to be exclusively dedicated to pietistic and devotional performance. Here too, it was Khomeini who, in the Vilayat-i faqih, first called upon his fellow 'ulama' to make use of religious occasions, not merely for worship, but primarily as a means of fostering dissent and politicizing society; of conducting mass political education designed to arouse the masses to join in battle

against the Shah's tyranny.

Among these religious occasions, the Friday congregational khutbah, first instituted in Islamic Iran on July 27, 1979, has been assigned with the most significant political function. Khomeini's awareness of the dominant role of the khutbah in the development and propagation of socio-political ideas, and, mainly, his appreciation of its instrumental value as a medium of political education in Islamic history and in modern Iran, have resulted in his determination to make it the principle device for solidifying and perpetuating the 'ulama's rule in the country. Hence, the system of Friday sermons all over Iran, but especially in the capital of Tehran, emerged as the most important means of internal indoctrination; as the main channel through which the Islamic government would advance its political ends of mass mobilization and regime support.

We have seen in the different chapters of the study, how the Islamic regime has resorted in sermons to the most evocative myths of Shi'i Islam to further these political ends. More precisely, the discussion has shown how the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth has been instrumental in the regime's campaign to achieve two principal objectives of

political education: to keep the revolutionary zeal of the masses at high pitch and, alternately, to legitimize its own rule, as well as its policy decisions and conduct, throughout the first decade of the revolution.

The Islamic regime's utilitarian use of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth for its own political objectives was not coincidental. It emanated from the strong religious susceptibilities of most Iranians and their attachment to the 'ulama'. Indeed, in view of the profound religiosity of Iranians, it was only natural that the regime should make the faithful understand where their obligations lay by making sophisticated use of Shi'i sentiment and symbols. In essence, there was nothing new in this procedure, as the 'ulama' had already expressed their political platform through Islamic symbolism during the struggle against the Shah. As one observant pointed out in the initial stages of the revolutionary process, "the Iranian dissidents are making extensive use of religious symbolism and idiom as a means of expressing opposition...."³

There is another, perhaps more decisive reason, why a given regime, and in our case the Islamic regime in Iran, should utilize myths to advance its own objectives of

internal indoctrination. I have shown in chapter two that a myth is defined as such, insofar as it is ontological and at the same time exemplary. It is ontological, that is, cognitive-interpretive, if it is able to locate the present of a certain society in the historical sequence and, thus, provide society with notions to understand the present reality. In other words, a myth should have the quality of explaining the peculiar reality of a certain social group, by narrating those fateful and decisive events of the past, of mythical time, that are relevant to the here and now. And, a myth is exemplary, that is, operative-behavioral, when it successfully conveys exemplary models for human behavior, for all significant human activities and institutions. In short, inasmuch as a myth becomes a paradigm for how things should be done, it not only interprets the present historical reality, but also indicates how to come to grip with this reality.

The usability of this twofold function of a myth for political ends, is evident in the Islamic regime's campaign to foster revolutionary zeal, as discussed in chapters three and four. By focusing upon those parts in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth which deal with the lifetime careers of the Imams, the regime has, in many respects, sought to delineate the events of the past, in Eliade's

terminology, of "primordial time," that have constituted the faithful as they are in the present. That is, the mundane afflictions of the Imams, their failure to regain their legitimate government from the Sunni "usurpers," and, finally, their martyrdom, all and more illuminated for the Shi'ah their own unfortunate fate as a failed, persecuted and oppressed sect, whose emblem is failure and defeat. Yet, the practical exemplary notions conveyed in the Imams' mythological careers, specified for the community how to cope with its existential predicament, how to change reality from one of failure and defeat to one of success and victory. To this end, the Imams, particularly the third in their line, Hysayn, have been portrayed as conquering heroes, as revolutionary archetypes and paradigms of revolutionary Islamic identity, who, on account of their exemplary attributes, should be emulated by their contemporary partisans. Hence, in the 1978-79 revolution the faithful were called upon to follow in the Imams' footsteps and, hence, join in battle against the Shah and be prepared to shed blood for this cause.

Following the ascendancy of the 'ulama' to power, the very same Imams have, once again, emerged as exemplary heroes, worthy of emulation by their partisans in

twentieth century Iran. The underlying purpose of this endeavor was twofold: first, the Imams' alleged revolutionary struggle against the political authorities of their own time, aiming at the establishment of an Islamic government, was intended to legitimize the 'ulama's own revolutionary struggle against the Shah and their successful bid for political power. In other words, by pointing to the Imams' exemplary militant attributes, as applied in their venture to seize the reigns of power, the 'ulama' sought to establish that their own militancy and subsequent political rule was a continuation, rather than an aberration, of an Islamic, Shi'i tradition. Second, by calling on the people to emulate, or reenact, the activism the Imams, the regime sought to propel the masses to revolutionary activity, to keep their revolutionary ardor alive in confrontations against internal and external foes.

Imam Husayn's part in the cosmogonic myth, commonly known as the Karbala paradigm, was most useful in this regard. The Karbala paradigm has been branded in this study as the origin myth of Shi'i Islam. That is, better than any other part in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, it tells how the reality of the faithful came into existence, and offers the means (the paradigm) of coping with this

reality. To put it differently, it is Husayn's brutal martyrdom at the hands of the Umayyad army that best explains, so emotionally and concisely, the origins of the historical injustice that became the legacy of the Shi'ah for centuries. In turn, the Third Imam's defeat is perhaps the only myth capable of enveloping and knitting so naturally, the aspiration for justice of the Shi'i sect. A corollary of this is that the Shi'ah's identification with the martyred Imam is, to say the least, almost total. Consequently, it is the exemplary modalities conveyed in the myth (the means to come to grip with reality) which are destined to be eternally pursued and embraced by Husayn's contemporary partisans.

Hence, by presenting Husayn as a fearless hero, perfectly aware of his imminent martyrdom but determined to fight come what may, the faithful were required to follow in his footsteps and be prepared to shed blood in contemporary struggles. This is to say, in order to instill in the people the necessary ardor to join in battle against internal and external enemies, the regime urged the people to embark to the battlefields and, if necessary, offer their lives as shahids in the struggle against "disbelief," just as their martyred Imam had. The call to emulate Husayn's struggle was evident during

various crises: when the regime set out to crush ethnic, mainly Kurdish, unrest in 1979-80; when, following the seizure of the American embassy (November 1979), relations with the U.S. deteriorated to the point of an open military conflict; and, most notably, throughout the Iran-Iraq War.

In addition, for the same ends of maintaining revolutionary zeal, the Iranian regime portrayed various confrontations and critical events as overall, comprehensive reenactments of the battle of Karbala. I have argued in different passages of this study that mythical time is repeatable and reversible. Whatever was achieved in the mythological past is not forever lost; it may be restored and regenerated. I will discuss this issue in greater length below. In the meantime, it suffices to note that, given the ability of the Karbala paradigm to mirror the aspiration of the Shi'ah for justice and their sense of failure, it has been repeatedly reenacted in actuality both before and after the Islamic Revolution (see chapter four). In other words, the total identification of the faithful with the cause of their Imam resulted in equations of contemporary struggles with that of Karbala; in the collapse of time and place barriers and the making of ongoing current battles into a

"new 'Ashura."

Thus, the war fronts in the Iran-Iraq conflict have been repeatedly portrayed, through various arguments and techniques, as the original battlefield of Karbala. Consequently, the Iranian nation has been equated with the forces of Husayn, and the Iraqi enemy with the forces of Yazid. Moreover, when in August 1987 approximately four-hundred Iranian pilgrims were killed in Mecca, they were equated with the seventy-two martyred companions of Husayn, and the House of Sa'ud with "the children of Yazid." Again, in their representations of the Haji tragedy prayer leaders have, in effect, staged the seventh century battle of Karbala in contemporary Saudi Arabia. Finally, when in June 1981 two large bombs exploded at the headquarters of the IRP, the number of fatalities was put at seventy-two, as if the tragedy of Karbala has, once again, been repeated, this time in twentieth century Tehran. The practical value of this technique for mass mobilization purposes is obvious. For, by terming the Iraqi president or the Saudi monarch "Yazid" and, alternately, by equating the struggles of the Iranian people with that of Husayn, the regime made the believers understand where their obligations lay.

Yet, the Imams' role in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth has not always been that of conquering heroes, of paradigms of revolutionary Islamic identity. The revolutionized image of the Imams emerged only in the 1960's and, to a greater extent, in the 1970's, as it was designed to accommodate the 'ulama's ideology of revolution and of politicized Islam. Indeed, for many centuries the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth has furnished little, if any, examples of activism and revolt. On the contrary, the lifetime careers of the Imams -- marked by afflictions and defeats -- highlighted their acquiescence to the powers that be. As a result, the exemplary notions they conveyed to the believers were those of avoiding overt action to change reality and of putting their trust in otherworldly redemption. In other words, insofar as the ontological, cognitive-interpretive dimension of the Imams myth accounted for the present existential predicament of the believers, its exemplary, operative-behavioral dimension has not put forward the means of changing their situation for the better.

It was, as mentioned, in the 1960's and the 1970's that the Imams myth has been transformed from one encouraging submission and passivity into one encouraging struggle and revolutionary action. This is to say, although the myth retained its previous interpretive

function (explaining the inferior state of the Shi'is as a persecuted and oppressed sect), its exemplary dimension now directed the believers to set forth and take immediate action to change their reality.

This brings us to one of the most innate characteristic of myths, namely, their tendency to be shaped and reshaped by their narrators in accordance with their own premises and particular conception of the world. In a word, the meaning of a myth depends entirely on the circumstances in which it is told. As the circumstances in which men find themselves change, so they reconstruct their myths. Thus, hand in hand with the Shah's secular socio-cultural reform program in the 1960's and the 1970's, the 'ulama', stripped of their traditional role and influence in society, set out to overthrow the monarchical regime. Their ideology of revolution, expressed in symbolic form, harnessed on the cosmogonic myth of the Shi'ah. Now, however, the image of the Imams needed to be transformed so as to suit their revolutionary platform. Hence, the "revolutionalization" of the Imams' careers.

I have already discussed how the reinterpreted version of the Imams myth has been used for arousing revolutionary

fervor in post-Pahlavi Iran. What needs to be addressed now is the following question: to what extent has the myth of the Imams been transformed? A myth, it may be recalled (see chapter two) is not the product of sheer fantasy, as it usually deals with events that actually took place; it contains at least a grain of historical truth. Indeed, as the present reality changes, myths must change with it, as this is the only way it can retain its practical value as a problem-solving "instrument" which is relevant to the present. In a word, as the reality changes, myths change with it, for they aim at creating new conceptions, allowing men to better understand and come to grips with their new reality.

Yet, by change, I do not mean the creation of a wholly genuine myth. A myth always maintains its structure. Its constituent heroes and villains are always the same, and it retains its unity of time and place. It is only the protagonists' actions or, the meanings of their actions, which are constantly adjusted and reinterpreted. Thus, myths transform only to an extent, for, in order to retain their ontological function -- locating the present in the historical sequence, beginning in "primordial time" -- they must draw a direct line between past and present circumstances. If the present circumstances should not

conform, at least in part, with "primordial time," myths are bound to lose their interpretive value.

This "limited" transformation is also apparent in the myth of the Imams. Let's view that part in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth which is concerned with the Second Imam, Hasan. Imam Hasan is, perhaps, the best example for our discussion, since it appears that his part has been transformed the most in order to suit the Islamic regime's ideology of revolution. It may be recalled (see chapter three) that the Second Imam was usually considered a man of compromise, who relinquished his right to the caliphate because of practical, power considerations. Indeed, aware of the disproportionate balance of force, he chose to be bought off by Mu'awiyah and, retiring thereafter to the town of Medina, led a quiet life. Hence, activism and revolutionary ardor were not distinctive marks of the Second Imam. Yet, in the sermons at hand, Hasan had turned into a dauntless warrior, committed to struggle against the caliphate with the aim to win back his usurped and rightful rule. But, what to do, the historical fact remained: Imam Hasan did not wage a struggle against Mu'awiyah, leaving this task to his younger brother Husayn. Indeed, for the reasons cited above, it appears that prayer leaders chose not to alter this historical

fact, or, at least, not to ignore it altogether. What was needed is to alter the meaning of Hasan's actions, not his actual actions or the events narrated in the myth.

Thus, prayer leaders acknowledged that Hasan "did not wage war." It was claimed, however, that he "raised an uproar," he "harassed" the government and "protested," short of waging an armed struggle of course. Moreover, he desired to join in battle against Mu'awiyah but failed, not because of his weak personality (for he was a staunch warrior), but due to the peoples' "disposition," their unwillingness to endure war. In short, aware of the futility of presenting a wholly distorted version of Hasan's career, prayer leaders have done the utmost to present a somewhat modified, yet still reliable, account of the myth's incorporated events.

The socio-political changes brought to bear on Iran have also effected the concluding part of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth, the return of the Twelfth Imam from occultation and his global revolution, or the eschatological myth of Shi'i Islam. I have already noted on the exemplary lessons transmitted in the traditional version of the Imams myth, namely, the abstention from overt action to change reality and the reliance on

otherworldly redemption. The Shi'ah eschatological myth was no exception, as it too propelled the faithful to submission and passive consent. Hence, the traditional doctrine of intizar ("expectation"), which called upon successive generations to passively await the return of the Hidden Imam (the Messiah or Mahdi) from occultation, with the hope that only he will bring salvation in the indefinite future, by creating a just social order and a world free from tyranny. In the interim, so the doctrine of intizar implied, one should endure tyranny and oppression; he should pray for the return of the Imam, not seek the actual alteration of his miserable state in the world.

The emergence of Shi'i Islam as a revolutionary creed has inevitably rendered the quietist implications of intizar null and void. Henceforth, the Shi'ah eschatological myth was also recruited to the campaign of fostering revolutionary zeal, whether against the Shah, or, later, against the enemies of the Islamic Republic. Hence, the emergence of "dynamic" intizar. This is to say, the Mahdi will not, and cannot, appear on his own accord. Rather, the faithful should intervene in history in order to hasten the Imam's return; in order to draw nearer, or pave the way for, the final redemption by the Mahdi. To

put it differently, man needs to begin the Imam's work of obliterating oppression and implementing universal justice in order to occasion his ultimate return and revolution.

Within this context, we have seen in chapter seven how prayer leaders portrayed the Islamic Revolution as a pure act of "dynamic" intizar. In other words, the revolution has advanced the return of the Hidden Imam from occultation and, thus, taken one major step toward the Mahdi's promised revolution. Yet, the Islamic Republic is also able to further advance the appearance of the Mahdi. If it would only apply the practice of "dynamic" intizar in other regions, spreading justice throughout the world and working for the liberation of mankind from the yoke of oppressive powers, so will the Imam return from occultation sooner. In short, Islamic Iran becomes, as it were, what Ramazani calls a "Redeemer Nation" (see chapter seven), for only through its intervention in history will the eschatological myth be brought to its ordained realization.

So much for the reinterpretation of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth to accommodate the Islamic regime's campaign of fostering and perpetuating revolutionary zeal. Let's review now how the very same myth has been utilized

in the simultaneous campaign to enhance the legitimacy of the clerical regime.

The Shi'ah cosmogonic myth served to legitimize both the regime's institutions and leadership, and some processes it has either initiated or responded to. First, it was used to sanctify the notion of "Islamic Government" headed by the 'ulama', or Khomeini's theory of Vilayat-i Faqih ("The Governance of the Jurisprudent") as it was put into practice after the demise of the monarchical order. This was due to the fact that the exercise of direct political authority by the 'ulama' was alien to the political experience of Iran, if not a radical departure from the mainstream of Shi'i thought. Second, it was used to legitimize policy decisions and to justify shortcomings, as the regime was increasingly facing social and economic problems, a violent internal opposition and, in turn, a growing resentment of Iranians who became disillusioned with the regime's pledge to live up to their material expectations. And, third, faced with the mounting economic burdens and casualties of the Gulf War, coupled with a lack of significant breakthrough in the conflict, the regime found it expedient to resort to the cosmogonic myth in order to defend and justify its wartime policies.

In all the above issues, the Islamic regime was especially keen of appealing to those parts in the cosmogonic myth which are concerned with the Prophet Muhammad and the First Imam-Fourth Caliph 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. More precisely, in order to legitimize its own rule, its policies during different phases of the revolution, and its conduct in the Iran-Iraq War, the regime resorted to what I call the "government myth of early Islam," dealing with the paradigmatic statesmanship and exemplary governments of Muhammad and 'Ali.

In many respects, there was nothing new in the 'ulama's utilization of the government myth as a legitimizing device. It was, in effect, part of their pre-1979 strategy -- already employed by Khomeini in the Vilayat-i Faqih -- of depicting their ideal society as a return to the pure and uncontaminated Islam of the first days, taking the polity of the Prophet and 'Ali as the only valid model for the Islamic state. In such manner, the 'ulama' sought to bestow upon their proposed form of government (which was, as mentioned, alien to Shi'i and Iranian political experience) a more familiar cultural aura, hence, presenting it as a continuation of Islamic tradition, rather than an innovation, a bid'ah.

As a myth, however, the political careers and institutions of the Prophet and the First Imam served to legitimize the 'ulama's exercise of direct political authority in a rather unusual way. In our discussion above I noted that mythical time is repeatable and reversible. Hence, the myth's power to reinforce the legitimacy of a given regime. As shown in the different chapters of this study, man considers himself the end product of mythical history, or in Eliade's terminology, of a "sacred event" that took place in "primordial time." Now, the activity which put this event into order is taken as a paradigm for how things should be done ever after, for it is the activity of what Eliade calls "Supernatural Beings." Yet, as things recede in time from their origin, they lose their vitality and strength, and so they decay and eventually die. The only way to restore them is, therefore, to reenact the event, by repeating the activity which had brought it into being in the first place.

In this regard, a given regime may claim legitimacy by portraying its integral parts and institutions as a reenactment of a "sacred event" of "primordial time." In other words, by claiming to be a repetition of a "sacred event" brought about by "Supernatural beings," possessing the vitality and efficacy of "primordial time," a regime

may render itself as exemplary and, hence, as worthy of emulation and perpetuation.

Indeed, we have seen in chapter five how the Islamic regime has rendered the Islamic Revolution, and particularly, the form of government, political leadership and Muslim society it has given rise to, as an inclusive reenactment of the government myth of early Islam; how it has proclaimed a successful reenactment of a "sacred event" (ideal government, leadership and society) brought about by "Supernatural Beings" (the Prophet and 'Ali) in "primordial time" (the dawn of Islam). Moreover, we have seen how, as the Islamic regime's stability and confidence increased in the post-1982 period, prayer leaders have branded Islamic Iran's form of government, political leadership and society as a greater achievement than the "sacred event" of the Prophet and the First Imam; how the clerical regime has allegedly laid the foundation to a new, superior "sacred event," consequently outdating the ideal model for all times, the days of the Prophet and 'Ali.

Hence, by reenacting, and, in some respects, superseding the government myth of early Islam, the clerical regime has, in effect, given birth to a new,

contemporary "myth," which is, by definition, exemplary and worthy of emulation by other Muslims, regardless of their origin or nationality. In other words, inasmuch as the leaders of Islamic Iran have laid the foundations to a new "sacred event" (an exemplary revolution which has midwived a form of government and a society which are exemplary too), they became, as it were, "mythological heroes," constituent parts of the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth. And, here too, the reenactment of the new, contemporary "myth" is intended to recover the perfection of the beginnings, to restore to things the vital force at work after they lost, in the duration of time, their efficacy and strength, and eventually died.

As discussed in chapter seven, the reenactment by other Muslim peoples of Islamic Iran's contemporary "myth," was designed to recover the perfection of the dawn of Islam, to restore to Islam the vital force at work when it was born in seventh century Arabia. In short, by allowing other peoples to reenact the contemporary "sacred event," the Islamic regime has attempted to nullify what Eliade calls "the primordial events," occurring after the "cosmogony," that have made Islam weak, submissive and the instrument of greater powers, of "global istikbar." And, allowing others to reenact the contemporary "sacred event"

essentially meant to export the Islamic Revolution beyond the borders of Iran. Within this context, the act of export should not be carried out by force or by military intervention. For a myth, it may be recalled, is exemplary, and so extensive communities throughout Islam are destined to emulate the Islamic Revolution at their own free will. In a word, in view of its outstanding success in reenacting the government myth of early Islam, the Khomeini regime should be safeguarded by all Iranians. At the same time, other peoples in the Muslim world are duty-bound to establish analogous governments, to reenact the contemporary "myth" in their own respective countries.

The Iranian regime's appeal to the government myth as a legitimizing device did not stop here, however. For, as shown in chapter six, reenacting the deeds of "Supernatural Beings" (the Prophet and 'Ali), also meant to carry out the very same exemplary government programs they had put into practice at the advent of Islam. That is, the Islamic regime has attempted to sanctify government policies, the need to redress deficiencies in society, and to justify failure of long-term social and economic goals, by showing that its own conduct was matched, or should be matched, to that of the Prophet and the First Imam.

Hence, the regime's attempt to vindicate the violent suppression of the opposition by equating the Prophet's and 'Ali's conduct toward the seventh century munafiqun with its own conduct toward internal dissent. Also, by pointing to the Prophet's and 'Ali's alleged stress on the need to maintain the people's support for the government -- their unity of ranks behind the "leader" -- the regime sought to circumvent growing popular dissatisfaction with unmaterialized expectations. Finally, the government programs of the Prophet and 'Ali were used to justify the regime's own policies of eliminating some of the most pressing social and economic problems, such as chronic shortages, hoarding and profiteering, corruption in government offices, and the failure to achieve long-term economic goals such as self-sufficiency.

The Iran-Iraq War was initially viewed by the Islamic regime as a "blessing." No doubt, as long as the regime was able to exploit the people's frustration with the mounting economic hardships by fixing the blame on the Iraqi enemy, and as long as the war diverted the people's attention from the government's failed social and economic policies, it helped the 'ulama' gain a firmer hold over the country. Nevertheless, in due time, the increasingly

severe economic repercussions of the war, coupled with the mounting casualties and the lack of significant breakthrough, elicited a considerable measure of resentment. The regime has therefore found itself in a dire need to explain and justify its wartime policies; and this was done, as one might expect, by appealing, once again, to the government myth of early Islam.

The discussion in chapter eight has shown how the Prophet's and 'Ali's wartime strategies have been instrumental in the attempt to vindicate the regime's policy of "War, war until final victory!," and, after July 1988, the decision to comply with U.N. 598 cease-fire Resolution. In other words, the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth has helped the Khomeini regime advance the cause of peace, just as it has helped advance the cause of war before the cessation of hostilities. Moreover, by equating its own conduct in the war with that of the Prophet and 'Ali, the regime sought to accentuate Islamic Iran's just and humane war strategies, and, consequently, to further enhance the legitimacy of its cause.

The appeal to the cosmogonic myth within the context of the Iran-Iraq conflict, was also intended to illustrate the Islamic regime's staunch commitment to an Islamic

world order. By depicting its wartime policies as falling into line with those of the Prophet and 'Ali, the regime has, in effect, sought to "islamicize" the conflict, to bestow upon the war a universal Islamic aura. Indeed, representations of the ongoing war by means of the "war myth" of the Prophet and the First Imam, were meant to show that Iran has joined in battle, not for national considerations, but for Islam, which belongs to all Muslims, Persians and non-Persians. In this regard, the conflict has been defined as a jihad -- largely conforming with its conditions and character as stipulated in the classical doctrine -- which, despite its defensive nature, aimed at the eradication of "disbelief" and the propagation of the Islamic faith worldwide.

It would be wrong to conclude, however, that the Islamic regime has rejected secular Iranian nationalism altogether, allowing it to be overwhelmed by its universal vision. For, as shown in chapter eight, the Iranian leadership has come to acknowledge the legitimacy of nationalism, especially in the sense of defending one's homeland or of taking pride in one's distinct cultural heritage. This positive patriotic bent was evident before, but particularly after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, as the conflict rapidly assumed the more traditional

character of an Arab-Iranian struggle. Yet, in both cases, the regime, apparently confined by dogmatic considerations, expressed its nationalist sentiments under the guise of Islamic universalism and the distinctive features of Shi'i Islam. Hence, throughout the Gulf War prayer leaders upheld the defensive nature of the Iranian cause, employing secular, patriotic themes. These, however, were frequently clothed by relevant references to the cosmogonic myth (most notably, to the wars of the Prophet and 'Ali), giving them an Islamic aura and meaning.

One last note is in place. We have seen above that the Imams' part in the Shi'ah cosmogonic myth was transformed so as to accommodate it to the regime's campaign of fostering revolutionary fervor. The question which follows naturally, is whether those parts in the cosmogonic myth which are concerned with the Prophet and 'Ali (the government myth) have undergone an equivalent change to suit the regime's self-legitimization campaign? It is evident that in their appeals to the cosmogonic myth as a legitimizing device, prayer leaders have opted to leave the relevant parts of the myth intact.

Indeed, in their representations of the government

myth prayer leaders often spared no effort to censure those aspects in early Muslim society which they considered negative. In other words, prayer leaders did not attempt to polish and embellish the plot of the myth, or to over-idealize the dawn of Islam. Yet, their dispassionate account of the events told in the myth was of great political significance, for it enabled them to observe that contemporary Iranian society was functioning better than society in the days of the Prophet and 'Ali. Other accounts of the government myth were also left intact. For instance, prayer leaders' representations of the seventh century munafigun largely conformed with the traditional accounts. Nevertheless, these representations too, did not lack an instrumental motive, for they were intended to justify the regime's violent crackdown of the opposition. Finally, there were many accounts of the government myth which referred, not to events, circumstances or deeds at the advent of Islam, but to particular sayings of the Prophet and the First Imam. Here prayer leaders needed to cite the Qur'an and the hadith only, in order to advance their practical, present-oriented argument, despite their sometimes liberal Persian translation of the sayings. Narrations of the Prophet's and 'Ali's sayings on the need to maintain social order, to perform manual labor and to economize, are prime

examples of such references to the government myth.

Notes to Summary and Conclusions

1. Vida Garoussian, "The Ulama and Secularization in Iran," Ph.D dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 1974, p. 166.
2. Menashri, Iran, p. 71.
3. "Moslems or Marxists," Arabia and the Gulf, March 3, 1978.

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